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"We Are Lost Together:" Blue Rodeo and the Construction of Identity

By

Gillian Lindsay Turnbull ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Department of Music

Edmonton, Alberta

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Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research on June 24, 2003.

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "*We Are Lost Together:" Blue Rodeo and the Construction of a Canadian Identity* submitted by Gillian Lindsay Turnbull in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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Abstract

Place takes on an exceptional role in discourse on Canadian music, as a marker of cultural boundaries, constructing a national identity. Canadian music has been known to be commonly been defined as "genreless" because of the comfortable convergence of international influences into its national sound. Representations of the nation, its inhabitants, its history, and its landscape have partially determined the success of artists such as Blue Rodeo; the mystical power attributed to the multicultural nature of the country and its land having recently acquired substantial marketing value.

This paper will examine the role of the Canadian band, Blue Rodeo, in the construction of Canadian, Western Canadian, and Native Canadian identity through references to landscape, history, and place. Blue Rodeo's work in country, rock, and folk provides a way to link previous scholarly writings on Canadian pop and future contributions on country music, particularly in Western Canada. This paper will also inspect Canadian music's representation of place and the creation of an agreed-upon notion of the landscape's definitive position in national identity. This thesis will attempt to determine how Blue Rodeo constructs a regional, racial, or national identity through their lyrics, instrumentation, political work, and recording and video production techniques.

Dedicated To:

Mom, Dad, Blake, and Rory, for enduring the terrible mood swings of a graduate student, and for the love and support throughout my education.

The boys of Blue Rodeo, not only for being the inspiration for this work, but for being the reason I continue to study music.

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Introduction

One way Canadian music has achieved distinction from the ever-present referent of comparison, American music, is by referring to the vast space that makes up the Canadian landscape. Place therefore takes on an exceptional role in discourse on Canadian music, as a marker of cultural boundaries, constructing a national identity. Canadian music has been known to be commonly been defined as "genreless" because of the comfortable convergence of international influences into its national sound. This is clearly the case in many immigrant societies, Canada being no exception, and the collision of traditional Native musics with popular, folk, rap, and country music has recently become a regular occurrence. Such occurrences have been well documented but generically confined to instances, for example, rap[1], while Canadian country and folk music have long-suffered from the lack of scholarly attention in this area. Many scholars[2] have also discussed the role of Canada and place in folk and rock music, but very few (Lehr[3] being an exception) have focused on representation beyond Eastern Canada. Representations of the prairies (often romanticized) have partially determined the success of artists such as Blue Rodeo; the mystical power attributed to the West and its artists having recently acquired substantial marketing value. In addition, the exoticisation of Native culture and the growing acknowledgment of Native struggle have contributed to the popularity of Blue Rodeo's syncretic[4] popular music.

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[1] Adam Krims, *Rap Music and the Poetics of Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

[2] See Jody Berland, "Locating Listening: Technological Space, Popular Music, and Canadian Mediations," in *The Place of Music*, ed. Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 129-148; Barry K. Grant, "Across the Great Divide: Imitation and Inflection in Canadian Popular Music," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 21:1 (1986), 116-127; and Robert Wright, " 'Dream, Comfort, Memory, Despair:' Canadian Popular Musicians and the Dilemma of Nationalism, 1968-72," in *Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity*, ed. Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer (Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press, 1994), 283-301.

[3] John Lehr, "As Canadian as Possible…Under the Circumstances: Regional Myths, Images of Place, and National Identity in Canadian Country Music," in *Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity* ed. Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1994), 269-81.

Scholars such as Sara Cohen[5] have made innovative contributions to the role of place in music, or conversely, the role of music in place. Differing approaches to place and music include Feld's study[6] of the Kaluli people in Bosavi, New Guinea, with the examination of the integration of environmental sounds into song. While ideas of nature have crept into discourse on Canadian classical music,[7] there are few studies of nature in popular music (possibly because of the connection to urban environments), and even less has been examined with regard to popular music's role in creating identity and ties to landscape in Canada. Moreover, very little work has been done on what determines generic classification for commercial radio stations aside from research conducted by the Canadian Radio and Television Commission (CRTC), and what consequently enables a group such as Blue Rodeo to be played on a number of stations. In particular, music video stations such as Much Music, Much More Music (MMM) and the Canadian version of Country Music Television (CMT) provide often ambiguous vehicles for the broadcast of crossover music (MMM being the best example of this), accepting nearly all country, rock, pop, and folk music from many Canadian artists. Such acceptance possibly determines what is considered the "Canadian" sound, even in the instance of a single artist, and this Canadian sound is often simply a "sense of space," or place, in the music.[8]

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[4] Syncretic is a term that will be used throughout this thesis, and is not meant to be confused with a term such as "fusion." Rather, "syncretic" in the context of Blue Rodeo's music should be recognized as music that combines elements of various genres (possibly for a political purpose), but is not composed without consent from those groups of people that may still practice the musical tradition (in this case, First Nations groups in Canada); syncretic here also is linked to appropriation. Conversely, fusion would indicate music that is free to be used by any group for purely aesthetic reasons.

[5] Sara Cohen, "Sounding Out the City: Music and the Sensuous Production of Place," in *The Place of Music*, ed. Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 269-290.

[6] Steven Feld, "Waterfalls of Song: An Acoustemology of Place Resounding in Bosavi, Papua New Guinea," *Senses of Place* ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 91-135.

[7] R. Murray Schafer, "Rhythm and Tempo in the Soundscape," in *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 229-230; and "Music For Wilderness Lake," *On Canadian Music* (Bancroft: Arcana

These scholarly gaps can be addressed through the examination of the role of the Canadian band, Blue Rodeo, in the construction of Canadian, Western Canadian, and Native Canadian identity through references to landscape, history, and place. Blue Rodeo's work in country, rock, and folk provides a way to link previous scholarly writings on Canadian pop and future contributions on country music, particularly in Western Canada. It is also necessary to inspect Canadian music's representation of place and the creation of an agreed-upon notion of landscape's definitive position in national identity. For this thesis, I will ask whether Blue Rodeo consciously follows in the vein of propagated ideas of nationality and land, or adds to the growing rhetoric of Canada as a vast, empty space broken only by Toronto's urbanity through the band members' own original experiences.

Methodology

This thesis will examine the discursive construction of place based on, and reinforcing, beliefs about the nature of both regional and national Canadian identity, focusing on Blue Rodeo, who have at once confirmed and uprooted conventional notions of place through both recording and video production techniques. The video for "The Days In Between" juxtaposes images of an empty countryside with busy downtown Toronto, identifying the group with the former, while much of their instrumentation and writing on *Lost Together* (1992) and *Five Days in July* (1993) illustrate commonly-disseminated notions of "Western Canadian" sensibility. I will discuss the paradox of creating a purportedly inherently rural Canadian identity despite the large percentage of

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Editions, 1984).
[8] Wright, p. 292.

the population residing in urban agglomerations, and how Blue Rodeo's music contributes to such a creation. In the larger context of national identity formation, images from both album covers and songbooks will be examined; in particular I will analyze *Nowhere to Here* (1995) as well as the video "Hasn't Hit Me Yet," both of which represent Canadian landscape as bare, melancholy, and cold. I argue that as questions of the local, the West, and Canada are continuously renegotiated, Blue Rodeo not only adapts to new practices, but also constructs place and the West as a contested area of memory, relationships, and desire.

My project will also map the construction of Native identity in instances of Blue Rodeo's music. The presence and social definition of Native peoples in Canada has generally been acknowledged as central to the identities of Canadians;[9] and popular music has been shown to be basic to the process of Canadian collective self definition.[10] My project will begin to redress the scholarly gap on identity formation through syncretic popular music by examining the appropriation and integration of Native characteristics; those processes are demonstrated in Blue Rodeo's creation of and participation in the compilation album *Pine Ridge: An Open Letter to Allan Rock, Songs for Leonard Peltier* (1996), concerning the Leonard Peltier case, and their effort to draw in non-native talent from all over Canada. I will offer a detailed account of how they appropriate and inflect ideas of Nativeness for a particular social and political purpose, in particular their attempt to inject Native musical elements into the song "Smoking Gun."

The project will culminate with interview material from lead singer and songwriter Jim Cuddy. I will sample the airplay Blue Rodeo receives on two national music video stations (MMM, CMT) in order to identify Blue Rodeo's target audience and their genre classification throughout the industry. This is an issue, since, for instance, two compilation albums, *Just Like A Vacation* (1998) and *Greatest Hits Volume I* (2001), are intended to essentialize Blue Rodeo's catalogue for the general listener, and demonstrate a vast spectrum of generic experimentation and fusion.

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[9] Robin Mathews, *Canadian Identity: Major Forces Shaping the Life of a People* (Ottawa: Steel Rail, 1988); Julia Emberley, *Thresholds of Differences: Feminist Critique, Native Women's Writings, Postcolonial Theory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

[10] Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer, *Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity* (Toronto:

My work will follow in the vein of recent scholarship in place studies and theories of music, place, and identity.[11] The broad theoretical background for my work on syncretic music will be studies of race[12] and music in the United States and England.[13] Some more refined musicological focus can be gleaned from studies such as Diamond and Witmer and those[14] that map representations of "blackness" in anglophone popular music. But a good deal of work on the mechanisms of representation will have to be original, focusing on close readings of several musical compositions by Blue Rodeo; my analyses will integrate readings of melody, harmony, rhythm, instrumentation, in addition to less properly musical parameters of lyrics and imagery as drawn from albums and videos. My study will balance its focus between such source readings and the evidence I

Canadian Scholars Press, 1994).

[11] See John Urry, *Consuming Places* (London: Routledge, 1995); John R. Gold and Stephen V. Ward, ed., *Place Promotion: The Use of Publicity and Marketing to Sell Towns and Regions* (West Sussex: John Wiley & Sons, 1994); *Senses of Place* ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 91-135; *The Place of Music* ed. Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill (New York: Guilford Press, 1998).

[12] The term "race" in the context of this thesis is not meant to be interpreted as a concrete, inherent, and unquestioned quality that defines an individual or group of people. I would prefer to suggest here that I am in agreement with Gilroy's (and others') arguments that race is a cultural construction, and is merely used in this thesis for lack of a better term to distinguish between groups defined by this construction. Rather than substitute the awkward phrase, "cultural construction of race" for every instance in which the term arises, it should be understood that that is the meaning intended for "race."

[13] See Paul Gilroy, "*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack:" The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987) and Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).

[14] Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press),

can gather of public response, thus balancing the mapping of identity construction between cultural texts and audience inflection.

History of Blue Rodeo

Jim Cuddy and Greg Keelor, the founders of Blue Rodeo, both grew up in Eastern Canada in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Both had what might be termed as the "typical" suburban upbringing, one that was privileged enough to afford them extra-curricular activities such as hockey and music. Keelor spent most of his childhood in what he coined the "suburban paradise"[15] of Mount Royal, Montreal, and moved to Toronto in high school. He met Cuddy while they were finishing high school together, Cuddy also being a recent transplant to Toronto after having spent part of his childhood in other Ontario towns. Although neither Cuddy nor Keelor were serious about music at the time of their meeting, their subsequent friendship and experiences after high school led them down paths that increasingly indicated music was what they should pursue.

Before that realization, however, Cuddy abandoned the idea of a career in music in order to attend Queen's University in Kingston, possibly in part due to pressures he felt both from himself and his family. He noted, " 'There were no artists in my family. Music was a hobby, and that way of life was temporary. Committing yourself to being an artist is in one way a vow of poverty. So until I found some reasonable job that I could do while still doing music, I was very conflicted about doing it.' "[16]

This way of thinking continued well into Blue Rodeo's beginnings in 1984-85 and for a period of time after. After many fruitless attempts, starting in 1978, to find a regular

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1996.

[15] Michael Barclay, Ian A.D. Jack, Jason Schneider, *Have Not Been the Same: The CanRock Renaissance.* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2001), p. 577.

[16] Barclay, Jack, Schneider, p. 578.

gig, and one unsuccessful single, "I Don't Know Why (You Love Me)" under the band name The Hi-Fi's, lead singers Jim Cuddy and Greg Keelor decided to move to New York in 1981.[17] With a new name, Fly to France, Keelor and Cuddy jammed with local musicians, played the club scene, and circulated demo tapes in the hopes of finding a record contract. Not only were they unsuccessful, their opportunities to play live were quickly diminishing in a city that was chock-full of musicians. Keelor and Cuddy ultimately came to the conclusion that New York was not the place for them and moved back to Toronto in 1981. The music scene of Toronto was much different from that of New York: while New York clubs such as CBGB's were fostering the development of the well-received punk revolution (one that Cuddy and Keelor were involved in and influenced by), Toronto was witnessing the creation of the sub-genre now known as alt-country. Combining elements of punk, country, rock, and folk, alt-country (short for alternative country) thrived among the young Canadian generation looking to distance themselves from the light folk stylings of Gordon Lightfoot and Joni Mitchell and the over-developed phenomenon of progressive rock found in Rush and Lighthouse. In the embryonic alt-country movement, sponsored by clubs such as the Horseshoe Tavern and artists such as Handsome Ned, Blue Rodeo was born, seeing Keelor and Cuddy as principal singers and songwriters and a back-up band of Bazil Donovan on bass, Cleave Anderson on drums, and Bobby Wiseman on keyboards. Considering the duration of their previous attempts, finding a record deal now took no time: the band signed to Warner in 1986 and released *Outskirts* in 1987. However, both Cuddy and Anderson maintained their day jobs for several albums, Cuddy working in the props department at a film production company, and Anderson as a mailman. Several band members also started families during this time, and with the combination of the success of their albums and the income from their day jobs, were able to continue in a similar lifestyle that Cuddy and Keelor had experienced growing up.

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[17] Barclay, Jack, Schneider.

To date, Blue Rodeo has released thirteen albums since 1987, including a Greatest Hits collection, a live compilation, and a solo album each from Keelor and Cuddy. The band has seen numerous personnel changes: Cleave Anderson was replaced by Mark French in 1990, and French was replaced by Glenn Milchem in 1992; Bobby Wiseman was replaced by James Gray on keyboards in 1992, and Kim Deschamps, the band's eventual sixth member on pedal steel, joined in 1992 and was replaced by Bob Egan in 1999. Such changes would obviously steer the band in new stylistic directions, although Cuddy claims every departure into new generic ground, while possibly aided by the backing members, is borne out of both his and Keelor's desire to explore new territory.[18] As he notes, "each album adds something new and leaves something behind," which explains the group's move through punk, blues, rock, folk, country, soul, and pop. *Outskirts* is largely pop and punk-driven, with long, experimental keyboard solos and psychedelic atmospheres. *Diamond Mine* (1989) continues along the experimental line with short blues piano excerpts, distant, ethereal ballads, and the occasional country splash. In *Casino*, Keelor and Cuddy recognize early influences such as the Beatles in their vocal harmonies, up-tempo grooves, and guitar-driven rock songs, while *Lost Together* (1992) witnesses the band's first attempt at producing, and their new line-up directs the sound into loud, distorted rock numbers, Lightfoot-inspired folk ballads, and steel guitar-based country dances. Perhaps the most successful and well-known of their albums is *Five Days in July* (1993), actually written and recorded in five days on

Keelor's farm, featuring light-hearted country tunes and melodically-informed ballads. *Nowhere to Here* (1995) is a dark, introspective, wintery album, and *Tremelo* (1997) is a reaction to that darkness, combining light melodies with drawn-out, dreamy dirges. Finally, *The Days In Between* (2000) is an more musically focused, mature album drawing in country and early-fifties rock influences, and *Palace of Gold* (2002) finds the band backed by a ten-piece string orchestra and a four-piece horn section as they delve into soul and R&B.

Throughout their career, Blue Rodeo has toured Canada relentlessly, promoting most of their albums on cross-country tours during the winters, and joining the folk festival circuit during the summers. They have produced TV specials for *Five Days In July*, *The Days In Between*, and *Palace of Gold*; they have appeared on numerous compilation albums, most notably their own project for the Leonard Peltier foundation, *An Open Letter To Alan Rock* (1996). Blue Rodeo supports several charities and non-profit groups including AIDS awareness (World Vision), Greenpeace, and the Leonard Peltier Foundation. In short, they are widely popular across Canada, often referred to as a "national treasure" or an "institution,"[19] and are well-recognized for their diverse approach, down-to-earth nature, and longevity. This popularity has not extended as largely to the United States, quite possibly due to their broad generic swings (this will be discussed further in Chapter Four), but as they near their twentieth year as Blue Rodeo, they find themselves among the most successful and well-known bands in Canada.

Chapter Synopsis

In Chapter 1 I will examine the issues that arise with the role of Blue Rodeo's

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[18] Jim Cuddy, interview with author, November 20, 2002.

[19] See for example, "The Story of...Blue Rodeo," Much More Music, January 15, 2003.

music in creating a national Canadian identity. What is Canada's "national" sound, or is there such a thing? Does the music inherently possess a sense of space? Does it reflect the landscape in a way that music from outside of the national boundary can't? What is Blue Rodeo's position in the contemporary Canadian music industry? I will investigate theories of Canadian identity that claim to determine "Canadianness" simply through rejecting all that is American. This investigation will continue by addressing the development of what is considered to be the national sound (found in folk artists such as Gordon Lightfoot or Joni Mitchell) and how that sound has influenced Blue Rodeo's production techniques and writing style. I will also consider how Blue Rodeo's images and lyrics reinforce or oppose collective notions of nationality. How does their use of land and place naming figure into the creation of a romanticized Canada? Do they attempt to unify the nation in their music and create a singular national identity?

Chapter 2 will continue in the vein of Chapter 1 through addressing Blue Rodeo's attempts to connect with audiences from various regions of the country, particularly the Western provinces. In painting an idealistic picture of life on the prairies, Blue Rodeo not only continues with Ian Tyson's and Gordon Lightfoot's tradition of denouncing the East--Toronto in particular--but also creates a sense of place for western dwellers that I argue may not have previously existed. Scholars have elsewhere scrutinized endeavours by the tourist industry to draw people to the country,[20] presenting it as a timeless oasis away from the chaos of urbanity, while Blue Rodeo extends such strategies to encompass all of the West in songs such as "Western Skies" (1992). How does this type of representation figure into the identity of Western inhabitants? Despite the majority

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[20] Jeffrey Hopkins, "Signs of the Post-Rural: Marketing Myths of a Symbolic Countryside," *Geografiska Annaler* 80:2 (1998), 65-82.

(nearly 80 percent) of the nation's population residing in urban environments,[21] such music is bound to foster a newfound attachment to landscape and place, whether it is rooted in reality or not.

Chapter 3 will move away from issues of place to examine other aspects of collective identity in Canada, in particular examining how racial identity is affected or tied into a national rhetoric. Participation in protest events as well as common reference to the Native struggle in songs such as "Fools Like You" (1992) have placed Blue Rodeo in an advantageous connection with the Native population. While always unafraid to voice their opinions in songs, interviews, and concerts, Blue Rodeo solidified their association with First Nations people in their benefit album for Leonard Peltier. Not only do their songs incorporate elements of Native music, but members of Blue Rodeo have also claimed in interview material[22] to identify personally with traditional Native beliefs and practices as well as with Western European ones. These claims and the hybrid nature of the music on the album proved not to be detrimental to their popularity; rather they brought about a significant growth in their audience connection and appeal.

Finally, Chapter 4 will investigate Blue Rodeo's airplay and industry genre classification. Does the band's experimentation in various styles affect marketing techniques, and if so, are these experiments recognized as more Canadian than more generically confined ones? Has Blue Rodeo discovered an untapped market searching for variety within a single artist? The group's earlier work may be classified as rock with an occasional blues or country edge, while later releases (starting with *Lost Together*) incorporate outright side trips to folk, jazz, country, and pop as well as more blatant references to all things Canadian. *Just Like A Vacation* and *Greatest Hits Volume I* claim to represent the essence of the band and display a wide range of stylistic moves, while the most recent release, *Palace of Gold* (2002), witnesses yet another detour into R&B and soul.

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[21] Mary Janigan, "Saving Our Cities," *Maclean's* 115:22 (June 3, 2002), 22-27.
[22] Interview with Greg Keelor, *Tucson Weekly* Online http://www.desert.net/tw/12-19-96/mus.htm.

The aim of this project is to determine Blue Rodeo's role in creating and maintaining a Canadian identity, whether national, regional, racial, or musical. It will contribute to the growing literature on both Canadian and popular music and will, I hope, encourage further study on topics of cultural geography, country and folk music, romanticization of place, genre flexibility, and identity in Canada. I hope to discover how Blue Rodeo appeals to a wide and diverse audience through their use of lyrics, imagery, and references to Canadian places, history, and narratives, and why their music is considered to be distinctly Canadian.

Chapter 1

One of the most elusive aspects of a Canadian's life is that of a concrete national identity. We are both American and not American, both urban and rural, multicultural, colonial, regionally diverse yet nationally united. As Kieran Keohane says, "We cannot say what this nation-thing 'Canada' is exactly, but we say that manifests itself or that it finds expression in 'our way of life'...our food, our music, our customs, our festivals, or forms of recreation."[23] For many, any effort to be "un-American" is good enough to be Canadian. How do Canadians reconcile their uncertain identity with the imposing force of American domination, particularly in mass media and cultural products? How does the local music of Canada compete with the globalization of the music industry? What separates our musical identity from that of the rest of the world? Barclay, Jack, and Schneider struggle to find the answer in their book, *Have Not Been the Same*, a history of the Canadian music industry from 1985 to 1995. They note that, "All through school we've been asked what we think the Canadian identity is...The answer came out in the music we'd been listening to. It contained all those missing links that our education system was always trying to get us to think about: 'Where's our Canadian identity?'"[24] What exactly is the answer to this question and how is it manifested in Canadian music? Canada is an enormous land mass, one that, like every other nation, contains distinct sites and landscape features that act as repositories for collective memories, desires, and cultural artifacts. In what has become common discourse among cultural geographers and music scholars, much of the nation is *produced* in its musical activities, rather than remaining an unchanging entity to be commented upon.

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[23] Kieran Keohane, *Symptoms of Canada: An Essay on the Canadian Identity*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 19.

[24] Barclay, Ian A.D. Jack, Jason Schneider, p. 14.

The concepts of Canadian identity and music's relationship to place are too large to be examined in great detail here, but the theoretical stance that will be presented on both subjects will provide a basis for discussing Blue Rodeo's national identity and the Canadian aspects of their work. Perhaps the most intriguing idea is that of the inherent wilderness, nature-based, or rural character in Canadian music, often referred to as the vague "sense of space." What is a sense of space in music? I shall attempt to dissect this concept along with other stereotypically "Canadian" features of popular music and these concepts' roles in perpetuating rhetoric on what constitutes national identity, as well as how Blue Rodeo plays with such concepts either to uphold the rhetoric or turn a new lens on Canada. Through the examples of their artwork on album covers, the video for "Hasn't Hit Me Yet" (1994), and "Train," (1995) I will determine whether Blue Rodeo's rhetorical and musical strategies work to unify the nation (strategies such as visual and textual references to the Canadian landscape) and possibly create individual and collective relationships to place. I will also attempt to answer the following questions: how does place operate versus space in music? Is a national identity possible in Canada, especially as constructed through music, or is it imagined because of music such as Blue Rodeo's? Does Canadian music reflect the landscape in a way that music outside of the national boundary can't? How do Blue Rodeo's images and lyrics reinforce or oppose collective notions of nationality? How does their use of landscape images figure into the creation of a romanticized Canada? Is it possible that specific place referents and stylistic endeavours would affect their market acceptance south of the border, and if so, does it prevent Blue Rodeo from using them? While much of this examination will be informed by current place scholarship[25], many popular articles and books written on Blue Rodeo provide fascinating insight into the reasons that Blue Rodeo is considered by many to be a "national treasure" or the quintessential Canadian band.

Place, Music, and Identity: Imagined Communities

The population of a nation, no matter how small, is not a community. For when community is conceived of as a group of individuals sharing or participating in a similar interest or goal, individuals that are not only geared toward that participation, but know each other intimately as fellow members of the group, it is impossible to square the enormity and complexity of a nation with such a notion. This is a well-known premise of Benedict Anderson's work, *Imagined Communities*.[26] Every nation, though its members as a collective may potentially long to be regarded as a community, will contain numerous sub-communities within its physical borders, ones that likely would not agree on shared values, goals, and processes, would likely not even know each other, and remain an "imagined" community only under the label of nationalism. Benedict Anderson states: "It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion."[27] It is safe to say that a country is a community in that it is a group of people living in one locality under the same government; however popular notions of community suggest fellowship and personal connection between individuals. Given that the possibility of the very survival of nationalism in the postmodern era depends on local community solidarity in the presence of globalizing forces, it is little wonder that nations' inhabitants seek out unique objects to articulate difference from beyond the national boundary. In particular, countries either with little national history or who suffer from (intentional or unintentional) domination by larger and more powerful entities, must search for a distinct voice. In that case, according to Anderson, "Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined."[28] This is where Eric Hobsbawm's notion of invented traditions becomes relevant. Hobsbawm claims that the governing bodies of nations invent traditions in order to preserve some idea of history, antiquity, and stability within the fast pace of postmodernism, often a tradition that simply propagates nationalism itself.[29] Or, when facing the bombardment of international (or national, but competing) popular culture, nations' cultural organizations struggle to uphold musical traditions, invented or not, for the sake of reclaiming a notion of an authentic and original territory.

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[25] See for example, Leyshon, Matless, Revill; Keith Negus, *Popular Music in Theory* (Hanover: University Press of New England), 1996; Martin Stokes, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity, and Music," in *Ethnicity, Identity, and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, ed. Martin Stokes (Oxford: Berg, 1994); and Andrew Herman, Thomas Swiss, John Sloop, "Mapping the Beat: Spaces of Noise and Places of Music," in *Mapping the Beat: Popular Music and Contemporary Theory* ed. Swiss, Sloop, Herman (Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), 3-29.

[26] Benedict Anderson, "Introduction," *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso Editions, 1983).

[27] Anderson, p. 6.

Thus, it is not as simple as stating that a nation remains fixed and its music is a product of its stability and longevity as a nation, community, or physical locale. While many nations may wish to imagine that a national music emerges from the purity of its land and inhabitants and artists' patriotic commitment to that music, we must acknowledge that artists are just as responsible for producing the imagined community and national boundary as they are for reflecting on it. It is this production that permeates the perceived solidity of the nation and throws it into flux. Andy Bennett notes that while the term "local" is often used to refer to the nation for the sake of opposition to "global," this, too, is a problematic term in that it suggests a permanent, unchanging state.[30] Michelle Duffy agrees: "there can be no simple linking of a bounded and identifiable group of people to a particular place, for identity and place are not fixed and unchanging, but multiple and shifting."[31] The question then becomes, how does music produce place (and identity), and how do places and their role in music produce identity?

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[28] ibid.
[29] Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions," in *The Invention of Tradition* ed. Eric Hobsbawm

One can begin to find answers in the discussions of Jody Berland and Leyshon, Matless, and Revill,[32] all of whom are searching for new approaches to music and place. Leyshon et al establish these approaches in their introduction:

> Geographical work on music has until very recently tended to restrict itself to mapping the diffusion of musical styles, or analyzing geographical imagery in lyrics, working with a deliberately restricted sense of geography, offering the geographer's angle on well-trodden ground rather than asking how a geographical approach might refigure that ground…space and place [are] not simply…sites where or about which music happens to be made, or over which music has diffused; rather, here different spatialities are suggested as being formative of the sounding and resounding of music.[33]

Berland, in discussing how technological developments have enabled musical mobility, reconciles a new way of thinking about emplacement in Canada with the problems posed by possessing a popular music that sounds much like American music. While Berland's work informs much of the following discussion on Canadian identity, it is important to note a few theoretical points involving music and place before moving on. In quoting

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and Terence Ranger (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 1-14.

[30] Andy Bennett, "The Significance of Locality," in *Popular Music and Youth Culture: Music, Identity, and Place* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 52.

[31] Michelle Duffy, "Lines of Drift: Festival Participation and Performing a Sense of Place," *Popular Music* 19:1 (2000), p.51.

[32] See Berland; Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill, "Introduction: Music, Space, and the Production of Place," in *The Place of Music*, ed. Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill (New York: Guilford Press, 1998), 1-27.

Attali, Leyson, Matless, and Revill suggest that music is a means of socially identifying oneself, a symbol that is shared and generates conformity.[34] Berland agrees by saying that music works to emplace people and creates a community in the musical imagination: by listening to the same music as others who are far removed from you, you establish an imaginary connection that serves to reinforce your identity as being much like some listeners and different from others.[35] Martin Stokes supports these ideas as well in noting that the places constructed through music must involve an idea of difference, and that difference may be enacted as easily as creating a record collection based on its distinction from that of others.[36] In terms of the nation, "national" music serves the function of creating an imaginary community for its inhabitants by speaking a stylistic language, referring to indigenous history and events, or simply through airplay on radio stations across the country. This mobility of music that provides us with a sense of where we belong; despite changing locations, the ability to access our own country's music contributes to our ability to articulate a national identity.[37] How then, does a country as large and diverse as Canada sustain a homogenous national identity? Music provides a means of maintaining national distinction, but how is it manifested both musically and in the discourse surrounding it? The next section will examine these issues in detail.

Canada: Arbitrarily Constructed?

Jody Berland examines the reflection upon and production of difference and a sense of community in Canadian music, and asks, "What could be more arbitrarily

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[33] Leyshon, Matless, Revill, p. 4.
[34] Leyshon, Matless, Revill, p. 2.
[35] Berland, "Locating Listening," p. 130-131.
[36] Stokes, p. 3.
[37] Berland, "Locating Listening," p. 133.

constructed than Canada?"[38] Indeed: the country is relatively young, its citizens are regularly exposed to all the elements of American popular culture and mass media, and it is a regionally fragmented and ethnically diverse nation. What possible national unity and distinction could come out of such a situation? In an attempt to understand nationalism within the context of Canada's identity crisis, Beverley Diamond provides a problematic definition when quoting Tom Wayman: "'Nationalism is an ideology about individual being. It is an ideology concerned with boundedness, continuity and homogeneity encompassing diversity.'"[39] I suggest that Wayman's idea may imply that such an ideology prevails in all nations in search of a sympathetic and open-minded community. However, given the diversity, inequality, and sheer volume of diasporic groups in Canada, it could be difficult for such an ideology to become the basis for a national identity. Will Straw, a musicologist, supports the idea of a divided population in suggesting that the imposition of music on public spaces forces an invasion of an Other on opposing groups and "works to fracture the fantasies of a unitary national culture."[40]

Is it really necessary to seek out the particularities of Canadian identity? This notion merely exists in order to mark out difference, especially from the United States, and serves to find a likely nonexistent imagined community. Keohane recognizes that the supposed "Canadian" activities, for example, camping, skating, skiing, and cottage-ing found in Molson beer commercials are actually available elsewhere in the world. Canadian is "nothing 'essential': it is a contingent precarious identity; something socially constructed; a hegemonic construction…a constellation of elements articulated together as moments of a discourse."[41] Other scholars are equally perplexed and preoccupied with the search for "what is Canadian," to the point where research conducted on Canadian music turns to the artists for an answer. Timothy Rice quotes Bruce Cockburn in such an attempt: " 'I love Canada. It's hard to pin down--it's not flag-waving…Well, none of us has really figured out what Canada is, but nevertheless I have a very strong feeling for this country.' "[42] Even the most patriotic of Canadian artists encounters difficulties in articulating what being Canadian means; indeed current artists like Blue Rodeo struggle with it as well.

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[38] Berland, "Locating Listening," p. 142.
[39] Beverley Diamond, "Introduction: Issues of Hegemony and Identity in Canadian Music," in *Canadian Music: Issues of Hegemony and Identity* ed. Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer (Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press, 1994), p. 14.

In order to differentiate themselves from citizens of the United States, Canadians have created a wilderness or nature-related identity, an identity that grows out of the supposedly inherent and profound connection to the landscape that every Canadian possesses. In doing so, Canadians have more often than not portrayed themselves as relaxed, nature-loving, easygoing people who spend the majority of their time in rural locales and who have enough free time not only to conserve and protect the wilderness, but to dedicate works of art to it. The connection to the land is presumably an individual one, in that it arises from the desire for escape from urbanity, social confusion, and disorder. Keohane notes: "While this may be seen as expressing loneliness and despair, a pure lack of enjoyment, it is, I would argue, equally a celebration of an enjoyment of purity and unpretentiousness."[43] Urbanity is equated with evil, with America, and with unhappiness. In an extended endeavour to maintain a non-American persona, Canadians have largely decided to ignore the existence of their own urban centres and utilize the

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[40] Will Straw, "In and Around Canadian Music," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 35:3 (2000), p. 174.
[41] Keohane, p. 20.
[42] Timothy Rice, "What's Canadian About Canadian Popular Music?: The Case of Bruce Cockburn," in *Taking a Stand: Essays in Honour of John Beckwith* ed. Timothy McGee (Toronto: University of Toronto

vast distances between them to differentiate the nation. A lot of good that does: in a recent issue of Maclean's magazine, Mary Janigan reports that eighty percent of Canadians reside in urban agglomerations, and 48 percent of the country's population live in the largest metropolitan areas: Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Ottawa, Calgary, Edmonton, Quebec City, and Winnipeg. Between 1990 and 1995, the metropolitan-area population of Canada grew by 6.9 percent.[44] The heralded nature-loving persona disappears in light of these statistics, and serves to suggest that Canadians are much more like Americans than they may perceive themselves to be. Bart Testa and Jim Shedden note in their essay, "In the Great Midwestern Hardware Store: The Seventies Triumph in English-Canadian Rock Music" that Canadians were largely urbanized and working in industrial manufacturing long before the 1960s claims to the rural character of the nation were made, and say, "The cultural-nationalist construct of a rural Canada as authentic Canada must be regarded as a 1960s bourgeois-leftist-cultural-nationalist confection that served to fantasize Canada--and here Canadian musicians--as 'not-Americans.'"[45]

The ambiguous nature of any national identity, not just Canadian national identity, can lead to fears of the loss of the national culture; however that culture may exhibit itself in inhabitants' minds. This is particularly true of a country with a relatively brief national history and proximity to a cultural giant like the United States. Such fears have led to tremendous protection policies in Canada, most notably the CRTC (Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission), which requires that thirty percent of all music broadcast on FM radio stations meet any two of the following four

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Press, 1995), p. 251.

[43] Keohane, p. 122.

[44] Janigan, p. 22, 26.

[45] Bart Testa and Jim Shedden, "In the Great Midwestern Hardware Store: The Seventies Triumph in

criteria: 1) the lyrics were written by a Canadian; 2) the music was written by a Canadian; 3) the instrumentation or lyrics were performed by a Canadian; or 4) the performance was recorded or broadcast live in Canada.[46] The CRTC was created to enhance or awaken people's national identity, as noted by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's president, Alan W. Johnson, in an article entitled "Touchstone for the C.B.C.:"

> 'We are in a fight for our soul, for our cultural heritage and for our nationhood. Without a culture there is no political survival and we are not a nation. It is impossible to calculate, or even describe, the devastating, cumulative effects of the self-invited cultural invasion of Canada by American[s]…We simply are different from Americans in our history, traditions, institutions, and values…The timeless objective of surviving has been given a new imperative by the sudden awakening of the contemporary version of our Canadian crises of identity and nationhood.'[47]

Johnson's quote is an impassioned one that appeals to most Canadians' desire to not be American. However, the CRTC has not been as effective as hoped: rather than seeking out unknown artists and promoting their music to further the creation of indigenous culture, radio stations have tended to confine their thirty percent requirement to artists well-known in the States, beginning with Neil Young, Joni Mitchell, and Gordon Lightfoot, and continuing today with Shania Twain, Celine Dion, and Sarah McLachlan.[48]

Given that the above popular artists (especially the current ones) often do not seem to differ from American artists in their sound or stylistic endeavours, Canadians have been searching for alternate methods of distinguishing Canadian work. These attempts are made more generally with artists not well-known outside of the country,

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English-Canadian Rock Music," *Slippery Pastimes: Reading the Popular in Canadian Culture* ed. Joan Nicks and Jeannette Sloniowski (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2002), p.181.

[46] See the CRTC regulations Broadcasting Act, Radio Regulations, 1986: Chapter 948 Part 2.2 (1)-(9). From the CRTC website, http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/LEGAL/Radioreg.htm

[47] Lehr, p. 271.

[48] For a more comprehensive account of the CRTC's inception, regulations, and subsequent effect on

thereby furthering the conception of a contained, essentially Canadian culture. Perhaps the most ubiquitous and enjoyable characteristic is that of a sense of space, place, or nature emerging in Canadian popular music. Robert Wright gives an example of this when he states, with respect to artists like Bruce Cockburn and Gordon Lightfoot that, "Rurality, directness and simplicity were, indeed, the cornerstones of Canadian folk music; but these qualities were also evident in much of the pop and rock music written by Canadians who had crossed over from folk in the late 1960s."[49] Generally more often associated with folk or country styles than rock or pop, the ideal of rurality and attachment to landscape is the most heralded trait of our music.[50] Of course, the land also informed the much of twentieth century Canadian classical compositions as well, with composers such as R. Murray Schafer seeking out inventive ways to integrate sounds of the "natural" environment into his works. In writing on the soundscape of Canada, Schafer also rallies against urbanity: "This healthy give and take between sounds in the natural soundscape is disappearing from the modern urban world…If we were to make a continuous recording on a downtown street of a modern city, it would show little variation from day to day, season to season."[51] To contrast the urban-rural dichotomy in his discussion on Bruce Cockburn, Timothy Rice suggests the following:

> For many Canadians a sense of place and national identity is often associated with rural lifeways and vast wilderness. Cities, perhaps especially Toronto, and their fast-paced lifestyles often assume a negative valence. Unplugged music with texts about high winds and white sky may have spoken more powerfully to many Canadians than rock and roll songs about 'rockin' in Memphis' or 'dreamin' in Motown'…Many Canadians believe they have a distinctive, more peaceful life, perhaps more closely tied to nature.[52]

Canadian culture and radio, please see Chapter Four.

[49] Wright, p. 291.

[50] i.e. see Schafer, Wright, Rice, Lehr.

[51] Schafer (1977), p. 229-230.

[52] Rice, p. 242.

By this account, all those Canadians living in the wilderness, who have a life so closely tied to nature, will easily be able to identify that supposed ever-present "sense of space" in their music.

Space? Or Place?

Robert Wright, in quoting Bruce Cockburn, brings attention to the freedom with which it is used in reference to Canadian music, as well as the possible problems its usage presents:

> 'Space…isn't in American music…Space may be a misleading word because it is so vague in relation to music, but maybe it has to do with Canadians being more involved with the space around them rather than trying to fill it up as Americans do…The more Canadians fill up their space the more they will be like Americans. Perhaps because our urban landscapes are not yet deadly, and because they seem a accidental to the whole expanse of the land.'[53]

It has been suggested by many artists and journalists such as Cockburn that Canadian music has a sense of space. What does it mean? What is space, particularly in relation to place? How is it expressed in music?

I would like begin by problematizing the concept of space, with reference to Edward Casey's essay, "How to Get From Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena."[54] In discussing the modern era's cultural emphasis on the importance of space, Casey uproots conventional notions of the power of space over place. He argues that, in traditional conceptions, the particularities of place take a backseat to the generalities of space, that space is a universality and place merely articulates what is already present in space and time.[55] Casey questions how places came into being from an apparently blank, neutral space:

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[53] Wright, p. 292.

[54] Edward Casey, "How to Get From Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," in *Senses of Place* ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), p. 13-52.

> The idea of transformation from a 'sheer physical terrain' and the making of 'existential space'--which is to say, place--out of a 'blank environment' entails that to begin with there is some empty and innocent spatial spread, waiting, as it were, for cultural configurations to render it placeful.[56]

This way of thinking disempowered place, thereby making space a powerful partner with time, a transcendent being preceding immediate human perception.[57] The particular nature of place merely served to enforce this way of thinking.

Such a method of thought complements the predominant discourse of Canada. Unable to locate its power elsewhere, a dynamic identity materializes from its vast "space" that has yet to be conquered by humans. Equated with wilderness and nature, the frightening power of the space of the landscape affords the nation a unique and impressive definition of distinction. In following with Casey's argument however, space may not occupy such a powerful position after all. Casey notes that a phenomenological approach to the concept of space renders it useless in that all spaces become places upon being sensed: "There is no knowing or sensing a place except by being in that place, and to be in a place is to be in a position to perceive it."[58] There is likely no place in Canada that has not been experienced by a human at one point or another, and if there is such a place, how can it be artistically reflected upon as a space if not experienced? Casey also notes that the abstract notion of space implies stasis, an unchanging entity, whereas any growth or movement, whether by humans or nature, creates events, which in turn creates places. Places happen, witness activity and change, and are defined by their very movement.[59] David Harvey agrees: quoting de Certeau, he says social spaces are "more open to human creativity and action" and that the traffic of humans gives shape to space.[60] In a phenomenological approach, sensing a place is not a precultual or presocial activity;[61] rather places are built out of this activity.

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[55] Casey, p. 13.
[56] Casey, p. 14.
[57] Casey, p. 20.

Discussing Canada is now problematic in that the pristine, untouchable space suddenly becomes the rather boring concept of place in comparison: in place of the transcendence of space, Canadian places are now potentially much like places around the world. The purity and innocence of space is removed and the possibility for dirty cities and imperfection to move into empty land is closer. However, if we were to use concepts of a sense of space other than Casey's, perhaps it would be easier to understand how such an idea is imposed on music. According to Keith Negus, "A *place* and a *sense of space* are different…A place as the particular, concrete site of specific social activities does not always coincide with a 'sense of space,' the more abstract way in which we might locate ourself in the world."[62] In this sense, especially through music, a sense of space may merely act as a tool for the individual (or nation) to differentiate themselves from beyond their borders. This sense of space is not necessarily manifested in the music in any particular way. Rather a slightly different sound may be perceived as a sense of space because it suggests a certain location. It may also act as a way of removing oneself from a feeling of claustrophobia; Wright suggests that many artists made their way back to Canada from the States in the 1970s in order to feel that they had more freedom and

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[58] Casey, p. 18.
[59] Casey, p. 26-27.
[60] David Harvey, "The Experience of Space and Time," in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1990), p. 213.
[61] Casey, p. 18.
[62] Negus, p. 184, emphasis Negus's.

opportunity to move around.[63]

But again, the notions of space musicians and Canadian citizens may have are problematic in that they not only disregards the realities of place versus space, but they also suggests a picture of an ideal Canada, one that ignores the many similar features it has to America. As Keohane notes, there is no way of looking at Canada that is neutral, no ideal, unified country that can be portrayed or perfected in music.[64] And if we disempower the sense of space, that neutral, ideal perspective is erased. What does Canada become, then, other than a series of unremarkable, identical-to-American places, and what becomes of its music if it doesn't actually possess a sense of space?

I would like to propose, as I have done elsewhere[65], that it is possible for music to be spatially uncluttered, spatially located on instruments, or open in some way with respect to unresolved chord progressions and recording techniques that distance vocals or instruments. These types of techniques take shape in the examples of Blue Rodeo presented below. However, this is not to suggest that all Canadian music inherently possesses a sense of space, as I would instead like to follow in Casey's argument and advocate a *sense of place* found in textual references, stylistic traditions, and interview material from Blue Rodeo. The preceding theoretical ideas and the following examples and quotes from Cuddy[66] will support three dichotomies I have discovered and will set up to inform the rest of this chapter. These dichotomies are *imagined* dichotomies in that they follow a romanticized notion of Canada and its music. They are as follows:

Place versus Space;

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[63] Wright, p. 293.
[64] Keohane, p. 6.
[65] Gillian Turnbull "Distinctive Canadian Sounds: Rock vs. Folk in the Production of Place and Space," unpublished manuscript, November, 2002.
[66] Cuddy.

Urban versus Rural;
America versus Canada

Place, Urbanity, and America are grouped together, as are the imagined categories of Space, Rurality, and Canada. These dichotomies are exhibited in music often through a fourth dichotomy, that of Rock versus Folk and Country. I shall attempt to demonstrate that particular examples of Canadian music do not all possess a sense of space or openness, despite other distinguishable qualities that may be considered Canadian qualities.

At the Cottage with Blue Rodeo

There are many characteristics attributed to Blue Rodeo, whether correctly or not, to present them as the quintessential Canadian band. Writings in the popular press endlessly celebrate their down-to-earth persona, easygoing nature, and reverence for Canadian history, political issues, and places. Does Blue Rodeo imbue their music with a sense of space? Most certainly. "Cuddy and Keelor are city boys, but it was the sound of the country that shaped their musical sensibilities. 'I don't write about pickup trucks and I don't write about living on a farm or any of those ideals…However, the music and the wide open spaces it represents had always appealed to me.'"[67] In quoting Jim Cuddy, here the author demonstrates the easy connection made by Canadians among rural living, country music, and open space. Barclay, Jack, and Schneider take this even further: "*Five Days in July* is a pleasant, reassuring work that sounds as comfortable and familiar as one of Neil Young's country albums, as essential to a Canadian cottage weekend as a warm sweater and a case of beer. There's also nothing threatening about it."[68] The authors add to this image with a quote from Greg Keelor: " '*Nowhere to Here* was the end of winter, and it was all of us locked in that house. It didn't have the space to it. A lot of the songs are a lot darker, or a steady stream of them are.' "[69]

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[67] Anon., from Contemporary Canadian Biographies, http://web4.infotrac.galegroup.com/itw/infomark/753/316/24672113w4/purl=rc1_CPI_0_1Dec. 1999.

[68] Barclay, Jack, Schneider, p. 602.

In addition, Blue Rodeo does not come across as many contemporary pop music stars do. In publicity photos, concerts, and television interviews, they are generally dressed in blue jeans, plaid flannel shirts, cowboy boots, and t-shirts; they often sport long hair and hats--nothing *appears* to be carefully chosen or constructed. Although Frith notes that the audience usually realizes that stage clothes are carefully chosen, the band's look affects how one relates to them[70]; it is quite possible that as casual and unaffected as Blue Rodeo's appearance may seem, they construct it in order to follow in a Canadian ideal of being outdoorsy, relaxed, and casual. In discussing their appeal south of the border, "The Story Of…Blue Rodeo" (Much More Music) quotes both Jim and Greg:

> Greg: The American music industry is driven by profit much more than the Canadian industry. And that the commodity has to be well-defined and packageable and placeable on the front of a magazine cover.
>
> Jim: We're not beautiful and so we don't make people swoon, so we don't have that kind of focus, visual focus.[71]

But it is their visual appearance that purportedly makes them "ordinary" Canadians, singers the average person can relate to, rather than out-of-reach celebrities.

As for the subject matter for their music, Blue Rodeo often addresses Canadian issues and politics when not singing about the usual pop music subjects of relationships and love. When not mentioning specific places such as Pyramid Lake ("Cynthia"), the

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[69] Barclay, Jack, Schneider, p. 603-604.

[70] Frith, p. 219.

[71] "The Story of…Blue Rodeo," Much More Music, January 15, 2003.

Bow River ("Western Skies"), Whistler ("Whistler"), Montreal ("Montreal"), and English Bay ("English Bay"), they are referring to Native rights ("Fools Like You," "Smoking Gun," "Pine Ridge"), Canadian history and mythology ("Brother Andre's Heart") or politics ("It Could Happen To You"). Specific subject matter such as this may not go over well in the States, but it could give Canadian audiences a sense of belonging and national "community" that listeners outside the country may not pick up on easily. My question then becomes: does Blue Rodeo consciously pick these subjects in order to foster a national identity formation, or are these songs simply based on their experience of the land and country as Canadians?

And while textual references to places and history constitute an obvious method of furthering knowledge of and attachment to Canadian places, how is this manifested musically? Is there a different sound, indeed that elusive and mysterious "sense of space" occurring in Blue Rodeo's music? Is there a different style, varied instrumentation, or a vocal quality that is undeniably Canadian? When asked whether there was a unique sound, style, or harmonic structure to Canadian music, Cuddy responded:

> I think no, if you were just to look at it from, harmonically, no, I think…it would be indistinguishable from American forms of this type of music…what I've always thought inhabits the Canadian music is the character that is singing, so the character you imagine that is Gord Downie (the Tragically Hip), or that you imagine is Greg (Keelor), or that you imagine is Mike Timmins or his sister (Margo, the Cowboy Junkies)…I think that they are not as prone to being mythologized into super characters…one of the key aspects of Canadian music is that it's normal people doing unusual things.[72]

Cuddy's observation indicates yet another semiotic opposition that fits equally with the dichotomies presented above in suggesting that a star system is equivalent to America, while this purported humility is generally equated with Canada. If one is desperate to seek out a musical difference in Canada, perhaps this vocal quality Cuddy alludes to is it. But even that vocal sound is difficult to explain in musically theoretical terms. Certainly, the above-mentioned artists do not exhibit the vocal acrobatics found much American popular music; rather it is a more intimately recorded, perhaps often calmer, sound. This closeness makes it easier for audiences to see the singer as "one of them." Cuddy agrees:

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[72] Cuddy.

> In the same way that…Canadian hockey players are revered because they're just a kid from Kingston…and they were all things that we could imagine, and there's some kind of romance in that…that you succeeded and yet you came from very humble, understandable backgrounds.[73]

Aside from the accessible vocal quality of Canadian music, Cuddy doesn't seem to believe there is much else that differentiates it from other forms of popular music. However, the recurring theme of a sense of space emerges again in conversation with him, but in a different light.

> You know, I think when we first started, we imagined that stuff. But I don't think there's a whole lot of wide open spaces in our first record. But I think they start to come in as…every year we travel six months and get out and we realize the effect that getting out of a big city has…we all know what it's like to drive from Thunder Bay to Winnipeg. You go from the Canadian Shield to the wide open spaces.[74]

To Cuddy, wide open spaces means places removed from the density of the city, places where there is little human habitation between urban centres. Space in this case becomes not a blank template on which to inscribe meaning; rather a sense of uncluttered land that functions in relation to metropolitan areas. The dichotomy of urban versus rural will be further examined in Chapter Two. Travelling the country enables this concept of a sense of space: not an unconquered entity, but a change of scenery from urbanity. Travelling for Blue Rodeo informs much of their way of thinking:

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[73] ibid.
[74] ibid.

> The one thing that I think is extremely important about the Canadian music sound is…if travelling affected the music, it's because travelling was necessary to get started…If you see a Canadian band that has a hit on the radio, they've usually played for four or five years. And they've been everywhere. And I think that that has a big effect on their music…they've seen a lot of things, met a lot of people.[75]

In turn, these encounters have transferred to the production of videos, artwork, and songs, particularly in Blue Rodeo's recent years. The following examples will demonstrate their incorporation of travel experiences and their use of a "sense of space," whether by their own definition, or by the popular Canadian use discussed above.

Examples

As Cuddy mentioned in earlier quotes, the Canadian sensibility that Blue Rodeo is now purported to display regularly, did not manifest itself in their early work. There are numerous possible reasons for this: their initial travels did not give them a whole sense of the country and its nation-wide characteristics; the band, given their generic wanderings, needed to remain as marketable as possible in the United States and could therefore not use insider place names and subject matter; or perhaps an enormously positive audience response to their Canadian references perpetuated further acknowledgement of their nation. In any case, specifically Canadian material begins to materialize around the time *Five Days in July* (1993) was released, and continues to prevail in much of Blue Rodeo's work. It is understandable that the band derives their "sense of space" from the above-mentioned uncluttered lands and escape from Toronto. However, not wanting to discredit Cuddy's experiences, I doubt that his sense of space is acceptable in the sense of music composition and analysis. In addition, while there is no question that the band's travels affected their sense of the country and contributed to their sense of space, it is weakly manifested in terms of musical parameters. Visual and textual clues of the below examples are more useful in deriving Canadianness, but the travel and sense of relief is difficult to find musically. Casey's arguments seem more than ever applicable in the below analysis of "Train," as well as the visual clues in "Hasn't Hit Me Yet:" although the band may react to open land areas as open spaces, all of the referents in these examples are more about their travels and actual places.

Example 1.1: "Train" (1995)

A brief analysis of the song "Train" from *Nowhere to Here* (1995) uncovers perhaps the best example of what is suggested to be the Canadian sound (especially by Cuddy) working its way into Blue Rodeo's repertoire. It is unlike the other guitar-driven, hard-edged songs on the album; it is almost entirely acoustic, slower in tempo, and atmospherically light. It begins with the somewhat "ordinary" vocal sound Cuddy mentioned above; Keelor's singing is accessible and natural, almost lazy in quality. This characteristic of his voice combined with the gentle guitar strumming, the unobtrusive backing instruments, and the country/folk tinge to the piece render it a relaxed, peaceful ballad about leaving a friend behind to return home. What may insinuate travel are the high harmonies on the words "skin" and "sky" just before the chorus; they are distant and seem slightly removed from the immediacy of Keelor's voice, almost acting as an echo to his words longing for the person he's leaving. The lyrics are prominent in the evocation of a journey, the land, and the sky:

I'm looking back
Out onto where I'm coming from
Out into that big white sun
Out into that big white sun
Big white sun

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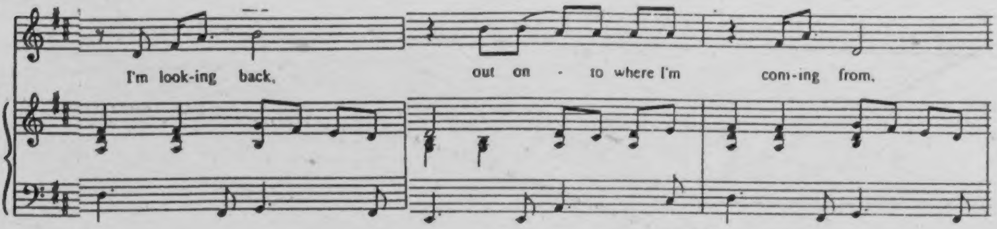
[75] ibid.

I was feeling kind of strange
Chasing these tracks to a room by the lake
I heard your song and it took me away
I wanted to stay[76]

The descending guitar figure that moves from the subdominant to the tonic behind "looking back," "coming from," and "white sun" in the chorus (see figure 1.1) gives a notion of regularity and constancy despite the character's uncertainty and movement.

Figure 1.1 "Train"



Despite the existence of potentially calming cymbal washes or ethereal organ sounds, that may to some suggest leaving home, uncertainty, and distance, "Train" does not exhibit much that would musically determine the band's travel experiences in Canada. Perhaps its uncluttered, open textures and gentle approach can be equated with the unobtrusive, quiet nature spoken of in its inhabitants, and its textual references to the land agree with the Canadian sensibility of being nature-loving people, but the majority of its travelling referents lie in the lyrics.

Example 1.2: "Hasn't Hit Me Yet" (1993)

The nature theme is again manifested in the example of the video for "Hasn't Hit Me Yet" (1993).[77] Filmed in black and white, the video gives an overall sense of isolation, depression, and inner reflection, due to the many scenes in which an individual wanders the land with a pensive expression on his face. The scenes take place in rural areas in winter, with much of the images focusing on bare trees, white sky, snow on the ground, and unremarkable landmarks such as abandoned farmhouses. Travelling is an important theme running through the video: it starts with images seen from a car window--trees rushing past, a far away destination point on an empty landscape and continues with repeated scenes of Greg Keelor driving a car to various unmarked locations. When not driving, Keelor is walking across the barren landscape slowly, as though lost in thought, and at certain points the entire band can be seen walking as well. In the middle of the video, there are several shots of band members standing in a field far apart from each other and gazing into the distance or up at the sky. It is a rather slow-moving video, aside from the side of the road scenes from the inside of the car, which doesn't quite match the exuberant pace of the song. Perhaps the greatest contributor to the feeling of isolation is the way in which certain scenes are juxtaposed on the screen. Many of the outdoor shots of landmarks or Keelor's walking alone take up a small fraction of the screen, with the rest of it remaining black, as though the shots are meant to represent one minute spot in a sea of blank space. The end of the video finds Keelor again standing in a field looking up at the sky at night while snow falls around him and a fire burns in the distance.

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[76] See full lyrics in Appendix I.

"Hasn't Hit Me Yet" won both Best Overall Video and Best Direction at the MuchMusic Video Awards in 1994. When accepting the awards, Curtis Wehrfritz, the director, said, " 'To live in Canada is to live in big open spaces. We always talk about how lonely that is and I think it's kind of a privilege to be in a big wide open space, on barren snow-filled landscapes, alone but not lonely. We tried to play with that idea in

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[77] See full lyrics in Appendix I.

this piece.'"[78] Whether or not it is a privilege to live in these "big open spaces," it is most certainly the picture of Canada that Wehrfritz and Blue Rodeo put across. By utilizing these images, Blue Rodeo creates an imagined community for their Canadian listeners. It is possible that many residents across the nation have felt the isolation, loneliness, dreariness, and darkness of Canadian winter and could perhaps be able to identify with the scenes of "Hasn't Hit Me Yet," if not the song itself. By identifying with such scenes, individuals may feel as though they are connected to the rest of the country which may be experiencing the same thing. Whether purposefully or not, Blue Rodeo follows in the vein of stereotypical Canadian images and ideas, and the "sense of space" is injected into the video through images that state the notion explicitly.

Is the band dealing with place or space here? Given that I want to move away from the idea of space, I would like to suggest that while they are composing in what both they and others may see as sense of space, they are doing so by featuring concrete places and their particularities--the particularities being that they are more open and less dense than urban locales. However, the images present in "Hasn't Hit Me Yet" could easily be deciphered as spatial in the empowered way Casey discusses space above. When asked about the process and reasoning for using such images, Cuddy seemed reluctant to answer: "That was all done on Greg's farm and I think that was more of an internal landscape for Greg."[79]

Much like "Hasn't Hit Me Yet," the artwork on the album *Nowhere to Here* (1995) presents a mysterious, detached visual landscape that speaks of the internal confusion Blue Rodeo felt at the time. The cover is an orange-yellow blur reminiscent of a summer sunset behind which in the vast distance is what looks like a country road. The pictures inside the CD jacket include a sunset in its last minutes, a section of a forest displaying perfectly lined bare trees, lightning flashes against a dark sky and silhouetted trees, and an empty stretch of highway (see figure 1.2). Overall, the images portrayed on *Nowhere to Here* suggest darkness, loneliness, and an attachment to the land and nature, a rendering of Canada that, with the exception of the cover, is pictured in black and white and perpetuates the notion of the landscape as empty and featureless. Cuddy commented on the images: "*Nowhere to Here* was a very disconnected, winter, gloomy, depressed experience for me and the cover's sort of perfect because it's all 'What is this?' picture. They're drippy and they're not in focus and the band looks sort of glum."[80]

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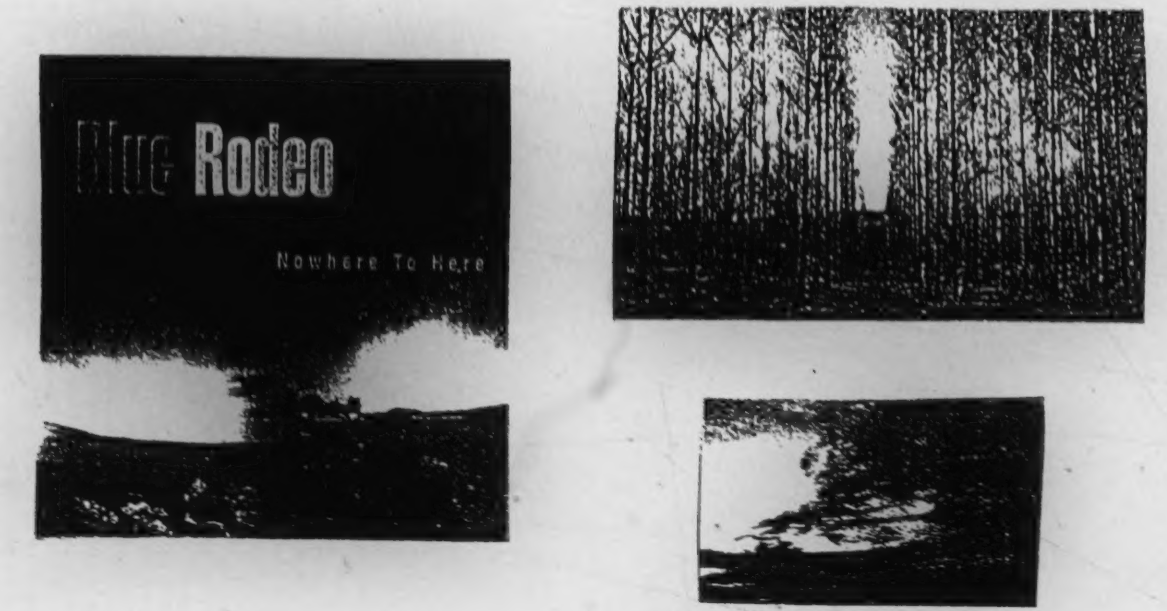
[78] Bruce Edwards, "Video Victories; Canada's Music Video Channel Colors it Blue; [The Winners]," *The Edmonton Journal* (September 30, 1994), p. C3.

Figure 1.2 (Images from the album cover of *Nowhere to Here* [1995])



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[79] Cuddy.
[80] ibid.

If, indeed, the images, textual references, and sonic particularities of Blue Rodeo's music are, as Cuddy puts it, part of the "traveller's diary," then does it really matter how the band represents Canada when they are lifting from their own experience? If they feel a sense of space, either in the way Casey attempts to detail, or by driving through open, uncrowded, rural areas of the country, does it matter whether it is space or place? It may not seem to be an important question, but it does matter in that what I have tried to argue is that space is an entirely fictional concept, if nowhere else but in music. How are Blue Rodeo's experiences as travellers uniquely Canadian, and is the transference of that experience to song exclusive to Canada? According to Cuddy, it is the travel and sense of the land that shapes his conception of the nation:

> What I think is a national identity is apprehending all the regionals. Canadians do travel around and they do understand what it's like to live in Halifax or what it's like to live by the ocean. They do understand what it's like, or have some notion of, whether it's real or imagined, of what it's like to live in Toronto. And you don't talk to many Canadians who don't have some kind of comprehension of their country…if somebody says, 'Oh, I've never been to the East,' people around them say, 'Oh man, you've got to go.' And that's not a world travel destination. Everybody says you've got to go to St. John's…that's very different. If you go to the United States, people understand their state, if somebody says, 'I've never been to California,' there's not a chorus of people saying, 'Oh, you've got to go.' There's a silence. And I think that that's a very key difference in Canada. And I think it's very key for musicians because a lot of the times when you're travelling around, when you're first starting, you're staying in bandhouses…you're meeting all [the] musicians in those different cities.[81]

Conclusion:

The original objective of this chapter has been to determine whether Blue Rodeo possesses a distinct musical or persona quality that can be characterized as Canadian. I will argue that they do, since they not only claim to be Canadian in their use of various textual clues, but also because I believe they are actually using a sense of *place* instead of a sense of space to coincide with ideas of Canadian music. To support my argument, I would like to present an example that demonstrated Blue Rodeo's effectiveness, encountered in my daily activities.

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[81] ibid.

For a class in anthropology, I was required to lead the seminar one week out of the semester, which meant finding readings for the class, bringing in examples to support my readings, and mediating class discussion. While the readings were mainly theoretical works on place, identity, and music, I suggested that each member of the class bring in a recording of music that reminded them of a place so as to discover why differing approaches to place and music can inform identity construction and maintenance. My own obsession with Blue Rodeo dictated that I bring in one of their pieces, in this case, "Side of the Road" from *Nowhere to Here* (1995), because it reminded me of a time and place where I felt closely connected to a community of musicians, Canadians, and Blue Rodeo fans. It occurred at a performance by the band at the Calgary Folk Music Festival in 1996. While the band was playing this song, I decided that I was where I was most comfortable: among co-music lovers and in a beautiful setting that I thought I could only fully experience in a country such as Canada. After I played my selection in the class, a co-student offered to present his piece next. He promptly sat down and played the exact same song and revealed that while he didn't have the same experience as me, the song never failed to remind him of his home in Montreal. He had first discovered this connection while travelling in Kenya, and all subsequent listenings had emplaced him back in Kenya, longing for his home in Canada. Both of us felt there was something distinct about this piece and the band, and though it reminded us of specific places in Canada, we talked as though it had an overall Canadian sensibility about it.

An uncertainty surrounds Canadian identity. How do we differ from America, or other nations? How do we create and sustain a coherent national community when separated by vast stretches of land? How do we form a definitive heritage and background when we have such a limited history? That uncertainty perhaps defines us best. Despite the struggle I have gone through to demonstrate what is "Canadian" about Canadian music, the above example of the anthropology class may best answer the question: it just "feels" Canadian, although that is not a good enough answer for such a complex question. Instead, I would suggest that the music reminded us of very specific places in Canada because of where we heard it, not because of inherent musical qualities that are only Canadian.

And while in line with the ideas proposed by Anderson and Hobsbawm, that identity and community are felt by all citizens, a "feeling" is not sufficient to explain the tremendous endeavours made to differentiate Canadian culture by artists, governmental policies, and Canadians themselves. Canadians desire something tangible, an original sound, a distinct set of artists and cultural products, or a look and persona that is their own. I have attempted to exemplify this "feeling" through a series of musical examples and textual and visual images expressed by Blue Rodeo. I then turn to my original question posed at the beginning of the chapter: could Blue Rodeo's use of these referents work to foster a sense of national community and identity in Canada, and is their music inherently Canadian?

There is no clear answer. Certainly, talking about Whistler or Montreal makes one think of those places, which happen to be in Canada. And visual clues such as clothing or landmarks can also contribute to ideas of Canadianness. What is inherently

Canadian in music may seem unclear; what a "sense of space" in music is may be destroyed by undermining the powerful implications of the word "space." What differentiates Canada from America may be invisible to most observers. Blue Rodeo's music could be Canadian because each of the above isolated examples, either coinciding with popular beliefs on the nations culture, or reflecting on actual Canadian experiences from the band compound to become somewhat of a national music. Blue Rodeo has created a "sense of place" for Canadians in writing about their travel and experiences of the seeming open spaces of Canada, and have inserted particular musical techniques that imply movement and spatial distance. Judging from Cuddy's remarks on his touring experiences, the sound of Canada, and their composition process, I would argue that while the band's Canadianness follows in the stereotypical idea of what such a thing would be, it does indeed derive from their personal experiences and connection to the nation. Their occasional romanticization of the country may not be marketable south of the border, nor may it reflect the actual reality of the increasing number of urban dwellers, but they nevertheless give Canada's inhabitants a method of differentiation, whether true or not.

Does it really matter if the ideas on what makes Canadian music Canadian are true? The important fact is that it is these very ideas and resulting cultural products that build national community and identification. Perhaps all communities are imagined, all traditions are invented, yet they function purely to foster attachment to a nation, a land, and a group of people, and they serve as concrete identity-construction devices.

To this point, I have examined the above dichotomies of place vs. space, urban vs., rural, and the United States vs. Canada in terms of an all-encompassing Canadian national identity. Chapter Two will take the empowered and romanticized grouping of space, rurality, and Canada further to include ideas of Western Canada versus Eastern Canada, place, urbanity, and the United States.

Chapter 2: Blue Rodeo and Western Canada

To this point, I have discussed notions of place and space with respect to Canada and a national musical sound. While still not easily outlined, most current discourse on Canada's music utilizes both ambiguous concepts such as a sense of space, as well as more tangible ideas of sounds of nature and lyrical references to place, to incorporate the nation's landscape into a recognizably Canadian repertoire. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Canadian music may also be distinguished by its relative ordinariness, or at least the unremarkable backgrounds of most of its national icons, often reflected in the vocal quality of these musicians' work. Through the examples of "Hasn't Hit Me Yet" and "Train," I demonstrated how these ideas of a sense of space, vast country, and travelling are manifested in Blue Rodeo's music, and how Canadian identity is constructed through movement across the country and the individual's relationship to the "natural" landscape, despite the majority the population in urban areas. One may have noticed to this point that a Canadian national identity is still elusive: it is an arduous task to determine its characteristics, especially as exhibited through music, regardless of the above mentioned qualities and examples. I will suggest in this chapter that while Blue Rodeo may be perceived as wholly Canadian in image and identity, they can often fragment the country through regional references, provincial contrasts, and concentration on specific localities, either in conjunction with, or separate from, an attempt to unify Canada in their music.

The major theoretical basis for this section comes from recent writings on place and music, specifically the notions of locality, fixed space, community creation, and individual identity found in the writings of Sara Cohen, Andy Bennett, David Harvey, Keith Negus, and Martin Stokes.[82] Other scholars working in the area of country music have made great contributions toward issues of authenticity, place, and identity, many of which inform this section's focus on Blue Rodeo's country songs. Both George H. Lewis and George W. Lyon have questioned the notion of authenticity in country music, particularly with its relation to urban and rural areas, western identity, visual images, apparel, and the country lifestyle, while John Lehr and Greg Marquis have continued in this vein on the subject of Canadian country music, radio, and national identity.[83] Finally, the work of scholars such as Charles O. Frake, Gold and Ward, Jeffrey Hopkins, and John Urry has examined the urban-rural dichotomy found in place advertising, and the effect of tourism and place marketing on representations of supposedly pristine, unmarked wilderness locations.[84] Such contributions support my discussion of Blue Rodeo's reaction to the construction of Alberta's landscape and their subsequent musical contribution to this construction through the regionalization of Canada by contrasting various forms of place-based imagery across the country.

The questions I will address are as follows. How does Blue Rodeo use a sense of place and the landscape of Western Canada[85] to create a regional, western identity for its inhabitants that listen to the band, and to compare the West to the East? Is the band influential in establishing a newfound sense of place and a fragmented, regional identity rather than a united, national one? How does this type of representation figure into the identity of western inhabitants? Is Blue Rodeo creating a sense of place that did not previously exist? How does the band create a dichotomy between Alberta and Toronto? For non-western Canada inhabitants, what is the touristic aspect of Blue Rodeo's representation? Does the appeal of the West lie in the landscape of the mountains, or the prairies, or both? If it is both, how does Calgary, situated between the two, and its cowboy culture and country music community, affect western depiction? And how does this music and identity creation figure into the marketing and promotion of places in the West, particularly Alberta? Using the examples of Blue Rodeo's song, "Western Skies" (1992), and video, "The Days in Between" (2000), I will attempt to address the above questions.

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[82] See for example: Bennett; Cohen; Harvey; Negus; and Stokes.

[83] See Lehr; George H. Lewis, "Lap Dancer of Hillbilly Deluxe?: The Cultural Constructions of Modern Country Music," *Journal of Popular Culture* 31:3 (1997), 163-73; George W. Lyon, "Words From the Range: Canadian Cowboy Poetry," *Canadian Folk Music Bulletin* 25:4 (December 1991), 3-8; and Greg Marquis, "Country Music: The Folk Music of Canada," *Queen's Quarterly* 95:2 (1988), 291-309.

[84] See Charles O. Frake, "Pleasant Places, Past Times, and Sheltered Identity in Rural East Anglia," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 1996), 229-257; Gold and Ward; Hopkins; and Urry.

[85] Personal communication with readers during the completion of this thesis has demonstrated that it is quite possible that Western Canada does not differ much from the Western United States in terms of landscape and culture. The examples presented in this chapter will demonstrate that references to specific locales in Western Canada work to create an opposition with Eastern Canada more so than an opposition with America. The work of Ian Tyson exemplifies these oppositions, as much of his writing focuses on the West as a region of North America.

Music, Place, and Identity

It has long been recognized, as noted in Chapter 1, that place is not a fixed essence for music to reflect on, but is constructed through many social and musical events and processes. This is particularly true of Western Canada,[86] as not only does it have a substantial farming and ranching community perpetually developing cowboy culture, but also its urban areas celebrate country music and cowboy culture as distinct attributes that separates the West from the rest of Canada.

Such distinction gains in significance in the face of impending globalization within the music industry. Syncretic music and world beat are no longer oddities in the popular music world, with many recent releases combining elements from numerous genres.[87] It is possible that many Canadians would feel as though their local culture (either at the municipal or national level) is being lost in the influx of American popular music products, and with other world influences occupying much of the music market as well, the preservation of the historically known Canadian folk and country music traditions growing out of European folk music may become more important. The promotion of "the local" at a national, regional, and community level could suffice as an identity-building device for the nation and its inhabitants. Sara Cohen notes, at the urban level and concerning Liverpool, that: "music was also used to represent the neighbourhood,…through the use of particular musical genres and styles that evoked a collective past and tradition."[88] For Alberta, a province with a short immigrant history in comparison with the rest of the country, a collective past or tradition is largely built on the lifestyles of early settlers, farmers and ranchers, whose "conquering" of the West provides the basis for the endless imaginings of the cowboy's life. A musical tradition, then, would possibly follow in the vein of the simple prairie folk tunes later adopted by singing cowboys such as Wilf Carter. As global media moves into all the remote pockets of Western Canada, local culture may be jealously guarded by some, and any artist who can maintain the authentic nature of western culture in their music or daily life would possibly be deified. Andy Bennett comments on this phenomenon, that "mass culture has an essentially negative effect in that it threatens always to erode 'traditional' cultures thus subsuming once distinctive local cultures throughout the world into a single,

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[86] Western Canada, for the purpose of this chapter, is going to consist mainly of Alberta, even though what would normally be considered Western Canada might be anything west of Manitoba. The overriding western culture of Alberta, as well as the landscape of the mountains and prairies provide a unique site for the examination of the development of a western identity. This is not to say that Blue Rodeo does not refer

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to other regions or provinces in their work; however most of their "western" repertoire focuses on places within Alberta.

[87] See for example, the Edmonton group Wajjo, who combine Scottish and Irish elements with African drumming, or the bluegrass/country/Hawaiian music of Led Kaapana.

homogenised global culture."[89] The maintenance of traditional culture is often considered valuable by artists wanting to sustain the tradition, though such a perspective in this paper is intended mainly for the observation of its existence, not because it is necessarily the moral stance of all involved.

While one might imagine that local cultures support their artists, such dedication to tradition is generally not particularly marketable in urban areas, especially in the live scene, on the radio, or in the recording industry. It therefore may fall on established artists to relate to sections of their audience by recognizing these traditions and local values. As Andy Bennett says, noting the social embedding by audiences, "For much of the time, popular music's relationship to the local has rather less to do with its being a local 'product' than with the way in which commercially available musical products are appropriated and reworked within the context of a given locality."[90] As I will show in the following examples, Blue Rodeo acknowledges western Canada not only through their references to specific places and personal experience in the West, but also through their work in country music. What becomes especially significant in the example of Blue Rodeo is the way Western Canadian audiences have inscribed a meaning on their music that wasn't necessarily originally intended, because of the audiences' forms of local knowledge, which informs their musical experiences.[91] Such interpretations are evidence of what Bennett terms "contested space"[92]--both a supposed objective reality of the local and the imaginative creation of the individual.

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[88] Cohen, p. 276
[89] Bennett, p. 54.
[90] Bennett, p. 60.
[91] Bennett, p. 55.
[92] Clearly, the issue of space versus place arises here again given my discussion of the terms in Chapter One. This is not to say that the notion of space is no longer a contested term in my discussion, but that it should be acknowledged that other scholars have used it in their own useful discussions of locality and

What is this objective reality? Is it possible for music to represent a landscape or a place in a way that is distinguishable from all other places? Keith Negus notes this problem in trying to determine what locality is in music: "The idea that certain musical sounds are associated with particular geographical places is a familiar one that has been used by the music industry in marketing campaigns and by audiences and artists when establishing a sense of identity for their music."[93] Current theoretical perspectives would possibly suggest that for western Canadians, and most audiences around the world, it is not necessarily a question of whether the music properly represents a place, but how that music, the artists, and the events that occur around that music build a place and its identity. Although the nature of country music and its authentic roots is a contested subject, it may be indeed a highly valued property of locally produced music in Alberta because of its historical roots and ubiquitous presence in its rural communities. Lyon notes that according to many of his Albertan informants, authenticity is somewhat confusing when it comes to local events and artists.

> What is authenticity anyway?…where do you place all those toothbrushed-faced old riders with Merle Haggard ditties coming out of their clearcut gums, including some Canadians who can sing you every verse of 'Okie From Muskogee'? At some point, you have to say that a cowboy song or poem is any item a cowboy sings or recites. But, again, what's a cowboy?[94]

In Lyon's observations of cowboy poetry gatherings in Alberta, he discovers that even though many of the performers do not live or work on ranches, they have an understanding of the tradition and history of the community and are able to convey that in their performances. There is no attempt to hide their true identity or the fact that they may have only ridden a horse once in their lives; rather the connection to the past

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music.

[93] Negus, p. 181.

validates their appearance of authenticity. Naturally, physical appearance plays a large part as well, although Lewis notes that hats, belt buckles, boots, and instruments such as steel and acoustic guitars entered long after the supposed tradition of country music began.[95] Authenticity, then, as much as it may be constructed to support the invented traditions of country music, in practice emerges from the ability of local artists not only to understand the lifestyle of western rural-dwellers, but also to create a culture, through that understanding, that distinguishes Albertans from the rest of the country. As Lewis says, "What is defined as 'authentic' by a particular group is likely what allows this group to identify with and make sense of the music."[96]

While country music often reflects on rural life and thereby draws a larger number of rural listeners, Greg Marquis notes that the fan base of urban centres is quickly increasing,[97] evidence that those who do not have direct connections to the cowboy life are just as affected and just as willing to place labels of authenticity on its products. Jim Cuddy commented on the nostalgic desire for country living in Canadian music:

> I think that the type of music that we play is very urban-informed…But it's very country/landscape-longing…I think in our type of music, the longing is to get away from the confusion and pressure of the city. And a lot of that is instant relief by transporting yourself to the landscapes you dream about, the landscapes you imagine. And I think that there's a lot of metaphoric representations of relief in our songs, whether climbing a mountain, looking up at the sky, having the rain wash things away.[98]

The urban-rural dichotomy works ironically one in Canada, given my earlier statistics on urban populations, and yet it remains a recurring theme not only in country music, but also in the discourse surrounding it. However, country music is not merely reflecting the

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[94] Lyon, p. 3.
[95] Lewis, p. 164.
[96] Lewis, p. 165.
[97] Marquis, p. 292.

desires of the audience, it is also *generating* such ideas in the minds of urban and rural fans alike through its illustrations of a life that may or may not exist in reality. John Lehr notes that country music "is a powerful medium for the creation, dissemination and popularization of images of places, geographical stereotypes and regional myths."[99] Marquis agrees: "The tension between an idyllic rural past and a troubled urbanized present is an important theme."[100] One may begin to make assumptions about life in Alberta based on its portrayal in Canadian country music--that it is a timeless oasis, a lifestyle that is bonded to nature and the land, removed from the chaos of urbanity, a chaos that is in reality found in Calgary or any other metropolitan centre of the West. Canadian music often perpetuates these notions and subsequently invents a further dichotomy between the East (urban) and the West (rural), projected by both Eastern musicians (Gordon Lightfoot) and Western ones as well (Ian Tyson). Lehr notes that much of the migratory movement of the 1970s from the East to the West was inspired by the number of employment opportunities available in the hydrocarbon industry;[101] yet many Easterners such as Cuddy were in search of the freedom and majestic beauty of Alberta. And this majestic image remains a powerful one in western music, especially for those musicians who continue to play a touristic role in the province: according to Lehr, "[the] image of Alberta is highly selective, with a blurred division of reality and fiction."[102]

Perhaps this blurred division emerges from the isolation aspect of tourism, particularly for visitors of the western provinces. A downright immaculate picture can be

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[98] Cuddy.
[99] Lehr, p. 272.
[100] Marquis, p. 301.
[101] Lehr, p. 277.

painted in a tourist experience, with only the most presentable and visually stunning places available for consumption. John Urry points out that "isolated from the host environment and the local people, the mass tourist travels in guided groups and finds pleasure in inauthentic contrived attractions, gullibly enjoying the 'pseudo-events' and disregarding the 'real' world outside."[103] Whether immersed in the Rocky Mountains or the heritage sites of the prairies, tourists miss the urban aspects of life in Alberta, those that may be very close to their own lives. When it comes to tourism, the trick lies largely with place marketing and promotion that rely on furthering rural myths and ideals of nature drawing the consumer away from the…everyday ordinariness in the city.[104] And while this chapter will explore regional myths through music, it is important to understand where much of the subject matter for such cultural products originates. Certainly, had the mystique of the West, the mountains, and the serenity of life in Alberta and British Columbia not been promoted to Torontonians possibly engrossed in urban life, Jim Cuddy and Greg Keelor would not have gone West and created music that reflected their encounters. Hence a recurring cycle enters: the promotion of Western places lures Eastern artists westward; they contribute to the promotion through textual and musical references; these romanticized images draw more tourists out with higher expectations, and place building and promotion occur on a larger level as a result. Funding cuts and the market-driven nature of Canadian governing bodies have forced localities to rely on their own promotion not only for tourism, but also for local economic and development purposes.[105]

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[102] Lehr, p. 278.
[103] Urry, p. 7.
[104] Hopkins, p. 65.
[105] Hopkins, p. 69.

What Hopkins claims in the following quote applies to rural Alberta, specifically with respect to the idea of the "mountain retreat," the serenity of the prairies, or the numerous tourist site promotions examined below:

> Spatial exotica is an acutely paradoxical myth; the ordinary and marginalized are promoted as extraordinary and centralized. There is little in the countryside that cannot be obtained, experienced and consumed, at least to some degree, in nearby cities, be it antiquing, boutiquing, dining, golfing, swimming or sunbathing.[106]

Yet, while such a comment may apply to the prairies, one might think the spectacular landscape features of the mountains the mountains provide an exceptional example of a place that does not necessarily require promotion. Despite existing literature on tourism possibilities and the mystique of the Rockies,[107] the mountains have long been a location that draws visitors from all over the country, particularly Eastern dwellers.[108] Its unique landscape provides vacation and employment opportunities that no other locale in Canada possesses. The question then becomes: what is it about the West that has drawn so many Eastern artists to visit and subsequently write about? Is it the lure of "open spaces" and an escape from urbanity, or is it the mysterious and threatening landscape of the mountains? What is revealed in the following analysis section on Blue Rodeo's "western" music is surprising, given the textual and musical cues in the chosen works. As the examples will demonstrate, music is more often than not intended to convey or be imbued with a specific meaning, yet could be received in a much different way, as it was in my own experience.

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[106] Hopkins, p. 75.

[107] See for example, Brian Bergman, "Seduced by the Rockies," *Maclean's* 115:34 (August 26, 2002), 22; Paul French, "In the Tracks of a Canadian Classic: Its Engines Groan. Its Brakes Squeal. Its Guides Double as Bartenders and Souvenir Salespeople," *Globe and Mail* (September 1, 1999); Mary Nemeth, "Object of Envy (Proximity of the Rocky Mountains Enhances Life in Calgary)," *Maclean's* 110:8 (February 24, 1997), 17; and George Smith, "Northern Rockies: This Eight-Million-Hectare 'Serengeti of North America' May Yet Be Saved," *Beautiful B.C.* 38:4 (Winter 1996), 34-44.

[108] i.e. see Cuddy.

Example 2.1: “Western Skies” (1992)

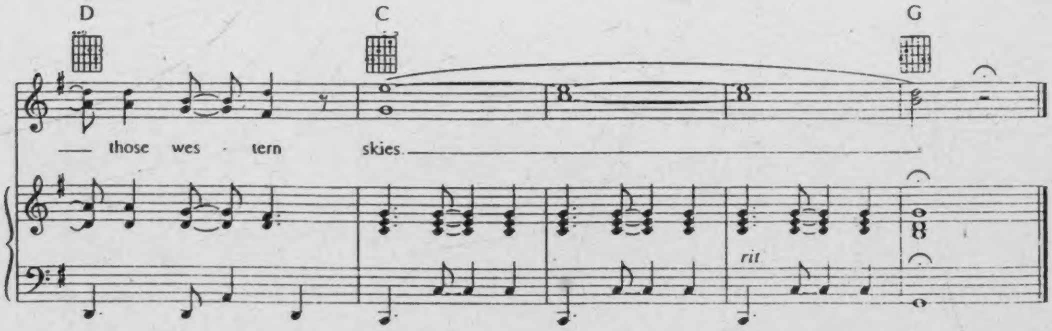
Blue Rodeo’s “Western Skies” appeared on their 1992 release, *Lost Together*. Sandwiched between two heavy rock songs (“Restless” and “The Big Push”), “Western Skies” comes as somewhat of a surprise. It is an exuberant country dance beginning with steel guitar and honky tonk piano, which then slides into a duet between Cuddy and Keelor on the virtues of western living. It is rare for the two to sing together for the entirety of a song; however their consistent singing in thirds lends a lightness to the already upbeat work. The lyrics persist in promoting the West, particularly in contrast to the East:

And I’d rather be
Lying by the Bow River
Watching the clouds go by
Yeah I’d rather be
Anywhere else than here tonight
Stuck in the city
But through the pain good things will come
After the rain the sun
But that don’t mean much to me
Stuck in the city
Oh how I miss those western skies[109]

The combination of these lyrics, celebrating the open skies of the prairies, the relaxed ease of life in a natural environment, with the decidedly old-time country feel of the instrumentation and harmonies evoke a picturesque image of Western Canada. According to Blue Rodeo, there exists no urban chaos in the West to disrupt their serene experience. However, while it is easy to determine their viewpoint from the lyrics, it becomes a somewhat difficult task to ascertain meaning from instrumentation, style, and melody. Nevertheless, the elusive Canadian sound discussed in Chapter One seems to be present in “Western Skies.” Perhaps it is the vocal quality of Keelor’s voice, as suggested by Cuddy, but I would like to suggest that in this case, what is Canadian, particularly Western Canadian, lies in other musical parameters. First, Blue Rodeo remains true to a well-established country sound in "Western Skies," using steel guitar, acoustic guitar, recognizable electric guitar country riffs, and fiddle ornamentation. The thirds-laden harmonies between Cuddy and Keelor is not as common as other intervallic distances for the duo, and they give the song a friendly tone, as if suggesting that visitors to the West will encounter welcoming spirits. All in all, the song follows in a well-known country tradition stemming from the original folk songs of Alberta that continued through the cowboy music of Wilf Carter and Hank Snow; the song evokes what some may recognize as familiar sounds of the Calgary Stampede and western culture in general.

If one is searching for other musical cues that "Western Skies" speaks to and about the western landscape and identity, the final cadence of the song provide evidence. The drawn-out plagal cadence has an anticipatory, and uncertain quality to it that calls forward the relatively empty (or landmark-less) prairie landscape and expectations of travel to mind (see figure 2.1)

Figure 2.1 "Western Skies"



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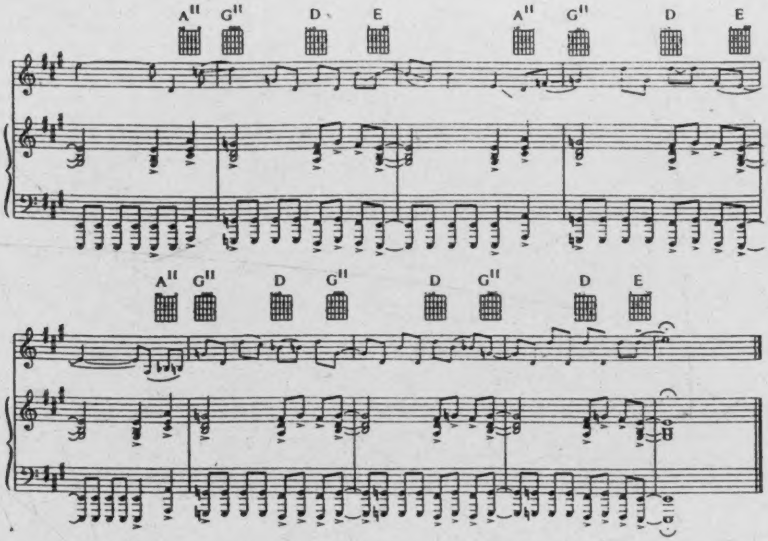
[109] See full lyrics in Appendix I.

In contrast, the previous track on *Lost Together*, aptly titled "Restless" also finalizes the coda with plagal cadences, however the dense electric guitar chords combined with a busy solo and quick-moving chord changes do not suggest the same anticipatory sense (see figure 2.2):

Figure 2.2 "Restless"



Example 2.2: "The Days In Between" (2000)

The video for "The Days In Between" (2000) contains visual images that complement the textual references in "Western Skies." Filmed in black and white, the video shows the band playing just outside a city in an industrial area. The cityscape is visible behind the band, and the atmosphere is somewhat gray and smoggy. When the band is not on screen, the video quickly flips through images of busy city streets, traffic jams, sidewalks crowded with pedestrians, and assorted images of chaos and darkness. These urban images are frequently in fast-forward, enhancing the idea of commotion and matching Keelor's imposing lyrics:

Then there are the days in between
When everything seems hollow and mean
Don't want to move
I just want to forget
Smoke another cigarette and go back to bed
These are the days in between

So I took a ride down to the end of the line
For no good reason
Just looking for a place to hide
So burnt out I can't explain
Just stumbling around from day to day
These are the days in between[110]

However, while Keelor is complaining about "the days in between" his vacations, there appears to be an underlying longing for not only time off, but escape from the city. This longing may first be noticed in the shots of the band playing, where clear sky above them is shown on more than half the screen, the band barely appearing at the bottom. The imagery changes during the instrumental solos as well, with a long frame of a dark city sky held while a juxtaposed image of an open road and sun shining through trees appears on the right-hand side of the screen. Later on, Keelor's head materializes in a close-up shot with an open sky above him as though he is dreaming of it. The graffiti, back alleys, traffic, and confusion, contrasted with the scenes of nature and serenity, as well as the city scenes imposed on the playing band leave no doubt that Blue Rodeo is fighting the monotonousness of their lives with these dreamy images. It should be noted that "The Days In Between" is a guitar-driven, high energy rock song with a tempo that borders on losing control. Keelor's screaming vocals and often single-note melodies depict a desperation that stems from frustration in the city. Gone is the relaxed country ease of "Western Skies," suggesting that a country style for such a subject would be inappropriate and is only used by the band for honouring the West and its traditions.

Similar examples can be found on their *Five Days in July* (1993) album, with songs like "Cynthia" taking on an easygoing tone to evoke the beauty of Pyramid Lake, Alberta, or "Whistler," on Cuddy's *All In Time* (1998) album, a fiddle-driven, laid-back country groove.

Given the above examples combined with the general discourse on the subject of Canadian music, the West, the landscape, and rural marketing, it is possible that the general listener would perceive Blue Rodeo's work as promoting and celebrating rural culture and life on the prairies. My initial interpretations of the above works, as a resident of Western Canada, and as a musician, were just that. However, my subsequent readings of the music and conversations with Jim Cuddy suggest that such an interpretation does not reflect completely how the band relates to the West, and that the meanings I attribute in my analyses do not necessarily match the musicians' intentions.

Alberta: Mountains or Prairies?

Despite its associations with cowboy culture and countryside living, Alberta has also long been known for its complex landscape and the sudden sight of looming Rocky Mountains upon departing the prairies. Hopkins notes that it is the myths of a symbolic countryside that appeal to the tourist/consumer, that the rural "connotes myths of 'friendship,' 'inclusivity,' 'courtesy,' 'family,' and by implication, 'safety'…In an age of intense, rapid and uncertain change, the countryside purports to offer a return to a less hectic, constant and secure place."[111] In comparison, the mountains are imposing, something to be fought and conquered, a landscape that may awe all, but only draws those willing to take on the challenge they offer. And while the mountains, like the

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[110] See full lyrics in Appendix I.
[111] Hopkins, p. 71.

country, are "unique, unexplored, magical, and memorable," and "innocence, harmony, spirituality, and life may be experienced amidst the idyllic and great outdoors,"[112] they are rarely the source of tranquillity and peace that the countryside is for western Canadian artists like Ian Tyson. Place referents in "Western Skies" such as Lake Louise, the Rocky Mountains, and Saddle Mountain imply that maybe it isn't just the plains that Blue Rodeo wanted to see or talk about. Perhaps the lure of the West lies largely in its mountainous landscape, and not in the emptiness of the prairies. Rurality is indeed available in Ontario, or Manitoba, or Saskatchewan, yet Blue Rodeo talks of Alberta more than any other place in their regionalized allusions. Below is an extended quote from Cuddy that tells the story of his and Keelor's first experience in the West and the effect it had on their work:

> When Greg and I finished high school, we bought an old school bus, turned it into a mobile home, and with two other friends headed out West on what we thought would be a year of travelling around on this bus going to skiing places and partying and that kind of stuff. Bus broke down…we didn't have money to fix it, so we…went out to the mountains and got jobs. They were in the Chateau Lake Louise and I was in the Banff Springs. And that winter had a profound effect on us. Living in the mountains for a year was like going to some kind of natural mecca for us. I think that we recognized that the trip was going to be a pilgrimage by the time we got there. I don't think we thought it was going to be in the beginning. But living in the mountains completely changed us, it was the first time that we had felt what it was like to really brave the elements, you know, how cold it was, skiing and walking around…We come back to it every year when we tour, we always take a day or two off and everybody hikes or does this or that. And the group of people that I hang out with, they're not outdoorsy, they don't do a bunch of outdoorsy stuff until they get there…There's something sort of mystical about it…it also has to do with hallucinogens, of taking hallucinogens when we were that age and in the mountains. And so I don't think it's the only way you would recognize the profundity of the mountains, but it's certainly one way to give that profundity greater impact. And traipsing through the Rocky Mountains, the first time you see them, and hallucinating, you…never forget it…it's a crack in your psyche, it shows you the world in a way you never thought. But I think that's what the mountains do anyway. I think they…present a landscape you didn't really anticipate…that made us all realize how slightly

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[112] ibid.

> tainted our life in Toronto was. So then some of us have gone back and enjoyed the city, but I think we realize what's missing to a much greater extent than we did before.[113]

If, then, the subject and meaning of "Western Skies" is more the Rocky Mountains than the prairies and their landscape as a source of comfort, happiness, and freedom, how do we interpret the other signs that Blue Rodeo is talking about the prairies, cowboy life, and western culture? What is the significance of the use of country instrumentation and styles? What do the open, empty images on "The Days in Between" mean? The answer, simpler than it may seem, lies in one word: Calgary.

Calgary: A Spiritual Centre?

Calgary is a city whose reputation is built on a strong oil economy, cowboy culture, and a friendly atmosphere. With Calgary known as the city of opportunity in Canada, a booming economy draws migrants from all over the country; *MacLean's* magazine reporter Mary Nemeth notes that Calgary benefits from the large export of Saskatchewan residents leaving the dying agricultural industry behind.[114] Country music in Canada has found a comfortable home in Calgary, thanks to annual events such as the Stampede. However, despite its hillbilly image thanks to the close-knit surrounding ranching community, or the corporate reputation that emerges from its economy, often the main draw of Calgary lies in its unique landscape. To the West, the mountains are visible from almost any point in the city, yet if one leaves the city limits travelling East or North, there is nothing but vast prairie. Its proximity to Banff, Canmore, and Lake Louise also entice visitors, as a number of resorts and ski areas are a short drive away. The mountains do not necessarily present an endless, open landscape as encountered on the plains and heralded by Canadians as the nation's defining visual feature, but they do present an experience with the nature and wildlife supposedly unavailable in urban America, provided one is removed from the commercial centres of Banff and Canmore. Even if one resides in Calgary, never travels to the mountains, and is completely immersed in the chaos of urban life that does indeed exist in Calgary too, the opportunity for escape to the Rockies is always close by.

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[113] Cuddy.

[114] Mary Nemeth, "Disappearing Saskatchewan," *MacLean's* 115:28 (July 15, 2002), p. 24.

Calgary has a history of maintaining live country music venues and preserving an interest in the culture that was created by the original residents and continues to thrive. Several bars are dedicated to presenting only country acts and prosper under such a reputation. And while Calgarians may not live their lives as cowboys and may encounter much of the same lifestyles and problems as seen in any other city, many residents attempt to try on a cowboy persona, if not only to acknowledge the city's history, then to fit in with the thousands of other cowboys emerging during the Stampede. The cowboy costuming can be seen throughout stores, restaurants, and clubs, and most local businesses put up "corral" or barn-type decorations.

Cuddy also comments on his feelings toward Calgary:

> Calgary is an unlikely place to be a spiritual centre, but for me it is. Very *significant* things have happened to me in Calgary. It was the scene of my *greatest* despair when I was young because by the end of that year in the mountains, I was pretty unhappy…I was confused…and I was also pretty ill…Calgary was this kind of sanctuary, but it was also a big challenge…every time I'm in Calgary there is a sense that something is going to happen. I think Calgary as being to *me* the epicentre of the West, for me. It's close to the mountains and it still has people that I feel that I've known for a long time, I've lived there…it is a place that I anticipate coming to and it rarely lets me down. If it were in the middle of the prairies, I don't think it would be the same. I think it has something to do with its connection to the mountains. I know it has something to do with its connection to the mountains.[115]

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[115] Cuddy.

Perhaps, then, the band's intent with "Western Skies" and "The Days in Between" was to acknowledge their intense feelings for the West and the experiences that occurred during their time there. The video images, while suggesting openness and nature that is often associated with the vastness of the prairies, can become a metaphor for the freedom Blue Rodeo associates with the mountains and the separation from an urban scene. In the case of the use of country music, while a western audience may want to believe it is Blue Rodeo following an authentic tradition established on farms in the early twentieth century and continued in rural communities (and that may very well be so), it is likely that the country style suited Blue Rodeo's feelings toward Calgary and its culture; the style is appropriate for the title and subject matter of the song; and it recalls the band's inception and early repertoire of alternative country and folk music. Blue Rodeo's work in country was not well-received, particularly in the West, and "Western Skies" could even be an unconscious attempt to build a bridge with its inhabitants. Cuddy commented on their country music:

> There was a very significant event that happened at the Canadian Country Music awards when they took place in Calgary and we were nominated and performed…we've been nominated for a lot of country music awards and there was a lot of people that felt like not only were we not country, but we were from Ontario and that wasn't really the home of country, [etcetera]. So Ian Tyson…was sitting in the very front row, watching us perform, absolutely stone-faced. And then at the end of the performance, he got up and single-handedly started a standing ovation for us. And that was absolutely his stamp of approval as a representative of the West for an Eastern band. And I think that changed a lot of things for us.[116]

Not only does Blue Rodeo attempt to bridge the gap between the East and the West by promoting the West as an Eastern band, but they contribute to the regionalization of the country in the process. This is not always a bad thing in that it may create both a newfound sense of attachment and identity for western residents, and also draw the rest of the nation's inhabitants towards the West, even if they only experience it through visual and textual images such as these.

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[116] ibid.

Promotion and Marketing of the West

Images of the Canadian West are mediated through journalistic articles, promotional materials, and further cultural products that depict it in ways that are designed to attract tourists from both within and outside the country. For example, the website for Travel Alberta contains numerous links to various sites through the province, many of them in the mountains. Below are examples of the rhetoric employed by such sites:

> The Canadian Rockies - grand masterpiece of the West. From quiet meadows to thundering waterfalls, towering peaks to misty canyons, Banff offers a unique assortment of sightseeing and leisure activities. Are you looking to find that perfect virgin powder for your first run of the day? Or perhaps strolling through Banff's wonderfully eclectic shops and boutiques is more to your liking. Whatever your style, Banff has something for you. We invite you to explore our site, and wish you all the best in making your holiday dreams come true.[117]

> Snow-capped peaks, glistening glaciers and sweeping vistas are just one part of the allure of Banff National Park. You can enjoy all the comforts of home in the town of Banff and the village of Lake Louise, or step out into the wilderness and the home of some of North America's wildest creatures, including grizzly bears, caribou and wolves.[118]

> Bathe in the 'Sacred water of the mountains' and discover a power over mind and body that is centuries old. Unwind in a spectacular mountain setting and soak in waters that have travelled deep into the earth returning to the surface hot and loaded with natural minerals. Take a short hike, enjoy refreshments overlooking the pool, indulge yourself with a massage or visit the gift shop.[119]

These blurbs, clearly designed to impart an immaculate picture of the Rockies, coincide with articles in Maclean's and other similar magazines that celebrate the distinguishing features of the country. Although most of these articles serve some other purpose besides promotion, such as relating a travelling story or commenting on the recent developments in tourism, the clear message is, "visit the mountains":

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[117] Website, February 16, 2003: http://www.banff.com/

[118] Website, February 16, 2003: http://www.canadianrockies.net/banff/index.html

> For several days we have been exploring the area's ridges and high-elevation valleys on horseback, sighting caribou, moose, mountain goats, and Stone's sheep. The wildflower photographers have revelled in the wealth of paintbrush monkshood, tall larkspur, moss campion, and field pussy-toes. Today, we stuck closer to camp, some of the group fishing at nearby lakes, others hiking to beckoning summits or valleys.[120]

Other articles have constructed Calgary as the object of envy, likened travelling in the mountains to being next to God, and celebrated the "open spaces" available in the West.[121]

Certainly, no matter how exceptional the locale, there is quite possibly a high level of interest in marketing places as much as possible. Even towns, ski resorts, and parks in the Rockies feel it is necessary to present themselves as the most appealing places to visit, despite their fortunate location. The excitement that these advertisements provide, along with that generated in the music of artists like Blue Rodeo, ignite an anticipation, both for tourists and locals, of the scenery of the mountains. Even though they may be visible from Calgary, being in the mountains is for most urbanites an experience that is out of the ordinary. Both Blue Rodeo's music and the promotional materials can incite new feelings of attachment and wonder to a place. John Urry states:

> Individuals do not seek satisfaction from products, from their actual selection, purchase and use. Rather satisfaction stems from anticipation, from imaginative pleasure-seeking. People's basic motivation for consumption is not therefore simply materialistic. It is rather that they seek to experience 'in reality' the pleasurable dramas they have already experienced in their imagination.[122]

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[119] Website, February 16, 2003: http://www2.parkscanada.gc.ca/parks/enterprise/hotsprings/index_e.htm
[120] Smith, p. 39.
[121] See Nemeth, "Object of Envy," and Bergman.
[122] Urry, p. 13.

Alberta is thus able to construct an identity of difference through its possession of what no other province in the country possesses: the combination of the mountains and the prairies, a place promoter's dream in that it offers a purported spiritual oasis away from reality and confusion. While it is possible that Keelor and Cuddy trekked westward in the 1970s because of the romantic image exhibited by such marketing, there is no doubt that their recent repertoire works in conjunction with place promotion to dichotomize the East and the West, and to enable identity construction through landscape, culture, and historic differences.

Conclusion: Is Blue Rodeo Regionalizing the Country?

Given that audience response research was not possible in a project of this size, I can only draw conclusions on audience interpretation based on my own personal associations to Blue Rodeo's music and visual images on the West. The above analysis certainly demonstrates that whether successful or not, Blue Rodeo consciously creates a distinction between the regions of Canada, and does so based on their perception of the country. Their music follows in the vein of the rhetoric of Canada that divides the country into regions based on landscape features (West Coast, Rockies, Prairies, Canadian Shield, East Coast), and while the music is possibly influenced and created out of such rhetoric, in turn it contributes to the continued regionalization of the country. Thus, in heralding the features of the landscape in their songs, Blue Rodeo not only appeals to their Western audience by singling out the mountains, they also potentially foster a new sense of place for Western residents that did not previously exist. Considering the audiences' ecstatic reaction to the lyrics of "Western Skies" in the many concerts I've attended in Calgary and Edmonton, Blue Rodeo has recognized something dear to Westerners' hearts. What Martin Stokes declares bears some relevance here: "Music...provide[s] the means by which the hierarchies of place are negotiated and transformed...music is socially meaningful not entirely but largely because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them."[123] What is important to note here is not that Blue Rodeo had a remarkable experience in the West and were able to transform that experience effortlessly into a perfect reflection of Western land and culture in song, but that their music has become part of the collection of materials and artefacts that Western residents use to construct their identity as different from the rest of the nation.

For non-western inhabitants, and non-Canadian tourists listening to Blue Rodeo's music and seeing their videos, the West may becomes somewhat of a novelty item in the way it is depicted against the urban chaos of the East. Alongside promotional materials for the West, Blue Rodeo's music offers serenity and an escape from metropolitan areas, and a gaze into the life of those surrounded by supposed wilderness. As Urry describes it, "That experience is to gaze upon or view a set of different scenes, of landscapes or townscapes which are out of the ordinary. When we 'go away' we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so."[124] For outsiders, the West's appeal lies not only in the majesty and mystery of the mountainous landscape, but in the active and purportedly ubiquitous cowboy culture that surrounds the area. In this aspect, Blue Rodeo left no stone unturned in their commentary on the West, and their honest and well-informed delve into country music and its tradition is a testament to their dedication to the region.

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[123] Stokes, p. 4-5.

[124] Urry, p. 1.

While certainly not claiming authenticity, particularly in country, at any level, Blue Rodeo may still comes across as an authentic country act much of the time to their Western audience, thanks to their acknowledgement of the tradition, their Western apparel, and their subject matter. The locus of Calgary as a spiritual centre for the band, its ties to country tradition, local culture, and the Rocky Mountains make it, as Cuddy puts it, "the epicentre of the West," and Keelor and Cuddy's experiences in Calgary lend another sort of authenticity to their repertoire on the area.

However well Blue Rodeo may have been accepted by the "hard-core" country audience of the West as authentically Canadian or country, the band faced another potential battle in authenticity with their work in Native music. The next chapter will closely examine this work, and recent theoretical perspectives on appropriation, syncretic music, and race.

Chapter 3

> The native myth has been…well, just one that I understand better. And when you see that world being manipulated and incarcerated and a structured genocide against the people, it's very infuriating.
> -Greg Keelor[125] (member of Blue Rodeo)

How can a group of white, middle-class, educated musicians, who have spent their lives in privileged urban environments possibly articulate the condition of Native treatment and political freedom in North America properly? What gives them the right not only to make political statements on First Nations issues, but also to express them through music appropriated from the Native tradition, a tradition that is in no way their own? Suddenly, what may have seemed a simple and altruistic gesture made by a well-meaning band emerges as problematic in light of such questions.

Canada, when regarded somewhat superficially, may not possess the qualities of a racist nation. Its open arms to diasporic populations and explicit celebration of multiculturalism in often government-supported initiatives suggest quite the opposite. However, beneath this exterior lie many challenges faced by First Nations and other subordinate groups. I do not wish to use this chapter as a vehicle for proving an inherently racist character in the nation of Canada; rather I hope to expose the difficulties that may arise when attempting to distinguish essential characteristics of both Canadian and Native Canadian music, especially when such music is created with the intention of containing syncretic qualities and to bridge racial divisions.

Blue Rodeo has worked closely with First Nations communities as a musical ambassador for the last decade. Support at various political events, performances on reserves for numerous occasions, and the production of *Pine Ridge: An Open Letter To*

Allan Rock (1996) to support the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee support Keelor's above quote in suggesting that the band relates easily to the Native struggle and Native beliefs. However, if it has not been difficult to this point to determine the Canadian character of Blue Rodeo's music, the task becomes nearly insurmountable in light of Native appropriation of the Native voice and musical heritage, since it is no longer just the white-dominated pop music industry and audience they are confronting. Rather than being detrimental to their popularity and Canadian identity, the band's work in this area augments their uniquely Canadian persona. Through the examples of a performance and the recording of "Smoking Gun" (1996), along with interview material from Cuddy, I would like to suggest that it is not necessary for a racial group to perform their own music to convey authenticity, but that training in and knowledge of the tradition can legitimate a performer of any race. Paul Gilroy's work on transnationalism, nation and race, and plurality rather than essentialism informs the previous statement and will also inform the theoretical basis of this chapter. Through Gilroy's concepts, and through current discourse on Canada and First Nations identity, I will attempt to engage the following questions: How is identity formed through syncretic popular music? What is Blue Rodeo's approach to appropriation and taking a Native voice? How do perceptions of authenticity figure into their work in this area? How could their work affect the construction of a Native Canadian identity? While the subject of race, music, and identity is an enormous one, some brief ideas will frame the questions raised in this chapter.

Race and Music

The theoretical discussion on race and music will be kept short, not only because

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[125] Interview with Greg Keelor, *Tucson Weekly* Online http://www.desert.net/tw/12-19-96/mus.htm.

the vast amount of literature on the subject is too large to review in this space, but also because Blue Rodeo's work in this area deserves an in-depth examination. It is important to note some key developments in recent race and music discourse, however. Perhaps the biggest pitfall in identifying a specific music with a racially distinct group is the inevitable essentialism that accompanies such identification. The moment music attains essential characteristics, regardless of the attributor, it develops the potential to be marketed, sold, and experienced as an "exotic" product. Gilroy, when discussing Native culture in colonial situations, notes: "The cultures of the natives, not just their labour, can now be bought and sold as commodities. Their exotic achievements are venerated and displayed...and the fruits of alterity have acquired an immediate value, even where the company of the people who harvested them is not itself desired."[126]

Essentializing a race's music is indeed what occurs when first discovering the properties that differentiate it from another group's music. The very process of self-definition requires a search for tangible differences in the Other, and this search enables appropriation to occur in an informed manner. However, it is ridiculous to assume that whatever may be regarded as essential characteristics of any music are immune to outside influences and change. In addition, perceptions of Black music (examined further below) are often more white constructions than undeniable qualities of the music; and its very malleability, demonstrated in its movement through various nations, transformations, and definitions, suggest that an while essentialization of Black music could be fruitful, they could work against other races' appropriations of it.

Thus, many music scholars writing on race have turned towards other methods of approaching racial identity, some of which produce further complications. Stokes notes, "Ethnicities are to be understood in terms of the construction, maintenance, and negotiation of boundaries, and not on the putative social 'essences' which fill the gaps within them."[127] A collective self-definition then functions to maintain discreteness from opposing groups. Stokes's notion of the construction and negotiation of boundaries suggests a porous, shifting conception of ethnicity rather than a fixed, stable one. It is a suggestive idea, since no collective or individual identity (as noted in Chapters 1 and 2) is motionless and constant, and no group is beyond the realm of transformation ignited by outside forces.

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[126] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness (*Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 249.

And while Stokes militates for a better understanding of the elusive nature of racial identity, he introduces complications. Those complications are more explicitly formulated in Stuart Hall's discussion of ethnicity and the attempt to validate Black history: "What is it like to live, by attempting to valorise and defeat the marginalization of the variety of Black subjects and to really begin to recover the lost histories of a variety of Black experiences, while at the same time recognizing the end of any essential Black subject?"[128] Subordinated races derive their power from essentializing: by asserting their solidarity through common experience, suffering, and shared identity, they are mobilized as a large force with a shared goal. The solidarity is often expressed through and shaped by music, not only by accepting all music produced by members of a given race, but by adhering to the stereotypical notions of what that music should properly represent in order to assemble its members into a cultural, racial, and musical superpower.

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[127] Stokes, p. 6.
[128] Stuart Hall, "Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities," in *Culture, Globalization and the*

Despite the complications de-essentializing raises, its premise opens up the door to moving beyond the crisis of "double consciousness." Gilroy, quoting W.E.B. Du Bois, defines "double consciousness" as the internalization of two identities--one American, the other Black--in the African-American population.[129] Rather than internalizing two discordant identities in the form of double consciousness, African-Americans (or First Nations peoples) can construct a flexible identity that incorporates elements of their own solidarity, the transnational identity of their race, and the imposed hegemony of the dominant race of their nation. A construction such as this, while certainly not eliminating the ill-effects of race thinking, would enable a more fluid approach to the dilemma of fixed essences and could easily be articulated in music. I have suggested elsewhere that Black music derives its power in the West by simultaneously existing as an authentic expression of blackness and as a cultural commodity, facilitating a double identity for Black musicians in the "white" world of commercial music and in the black world of "pure" musical communication.[130]

What then emerges results from de-essentialization and integrated identity, without losing the essence required for political and spiritual solidarity; this partially contributes to what Gilroy terms this the "Black Atlantic." Since a pluralist approach to race thinking abandons the idea of a fixed essence, and since what it means to be Black is constructed through various codes that don't entirely succumb to the appeal of affirming a unifying black culture,[131] a new approach must be created in order to incorporate the realities of racial ties. The Black Atlantic concept takes into account the common

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World System ed. Anthony D. King (Birmingham, N. Y.: State University of New York, 1991) , p. 57.

[129] Gilroy, *Black Atlantic*, p. 126.

[130] Gillian Turnbull, "Paul Gilroy," unpublished manuscript, 2002.

[131] Negus, p. 106.

experience and connection Blacks have, along with the idea that "the cultural and political connections that bind black people together have been continually *created* through identities and practices that have been generated during processes of movement and mediation."[132] Certainly, although Negus and Gilroy explore these ideas in terms of the Black population, they are also suggestive for the study of other subordinated racial groups in any nation.

And at this point, the problem indeed *becomes* the nation, as its fostering of national identity is inevitably associated with racial belonging. While the elimination of nations is hardly a feasible solution, a recognition of the issues raised by Gilroy on the subject can facilitate new approaches to national identity and race, including within Canada.

Race, National Identity, and Canada

Gilroy says that "The suggestion that no one lives outside the national community is only plausible if the issue of racism is excluded."[133] While equating race and nation would be an easy, clean way of determining the nature of national identity, the reality of messy national systems, colonialism, and the global population movement of the postmodern era undermines its validity. However, it remains somewhat of a national desire to create the imagined community out of a shared heritage and background; what easier background could one find but that of race? Biological difference is supposedly the most "concrete" method of determining difference, or is at least naturalized as such (even though race, as noted in the introduction, should not be construed as biological); certainly a solid identity mentality would emerge from the nation-equals-race idea. But this is clearly an impossibility, since it is rare that a single race are the only inhabitants to occupy a nation's land. And that means finding a way of distinguishing the nation that does not rely explicitly on racial characteristics. Gilroy argues against Benedict Anderson's suggestions that any person of any race can learn the language of a nation and that nations are not built on notions of biological difference. Instead, Gilroy notes that it is this very ambiguity of the difference between race and culture that countries rely on to create the idea of a homogenous community.[134] The language of a nation undermines any impression of difference in implying that all citizens depend on the common good rather than the articulation of their own history and background.[135]

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[132] Negus, p. 107.
[133] Paul Gilroy, "*There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack:*", p. 54.

These forces of national rhetoric may work in many instances, but when it comes to the confused and complex cases of colonialism, how does race figure into the identification of the nation? Gilroy says that, "The necessarily messy operation of living imperial systems subverted the idea of nations as closed, racialized units integrated by their perfected, particular cultures."[136] If a nation is indeed defined by its race, a country such as Canada would have ideally been defined as Native (although it wouldn't have worked as well since the concept of nation has been imported from Europe); its inhabitants would have adopted the practices and traditions of the original population. Clearly, being a colonial empire, Canada did not become such a thing, and the idea that European settlers would integrate with the First Nations to live harmoniously and produce not only a mixed-race nation, but the cultural products that are resultant of intimate connections, is nonsense. Instead, Canada emerged as a new Europe in the colonial setting and disregarded most Native habits and lifestyles: "The dominant groups could enlist the irresistible momentum of history on their side and treat their apparently anachronistic subordinates as if they belonged to the past and had no future."[137]

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[134] Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, p. 44-45.
[135] Turnbull, "Paul Gilroy," p. 3.

The attempt to pass Canada off as a homogenous nation has failed. Not only are First Nations fighting back for their lost land, practices, and culture, but also Canada's outward appearance, whether viewed positively or negatively, is anything but homogenous. As Keohane says:

> The unity of what is common to us, let's call it 'Canada,' is an allusive/elusive ideal that is always denied by its being contested and mediated through different particular experiences…it is perpetually reconstituted by the antagonistic discourse, as the assertion of any particularity (Maritimer, gay, Korean) always already implicitly presupposes a unified ideal 'Canada' (which simultaneously excludes and thus constitutes, and incorporates and thus decomposes, the particular identity).[138]

Partially in response to the unsuccessful racial unification of the country, though there are many reasons for its development as such, Canada has embraced its identity as a multicultural nation, one that encourages, fosters, and defines itself by ethnic variety and celebration of other nations' traditions. I have suggested earlier that there may be specific reasons for this celebration aside from the fact that its racial identity is not that of the First Nations, nor does it come from any other particular part of the world.[139] The reason may be simply that because of its relatively short history as a country compared to its first-world counterparts, Canada has used the multicultural persona to define itself. It would not be regarded as the "melting pot" that is the United States; rather, its multiculturalism would allow for difference to be an integral part of its national confines. Gilroy supports this notion on his hopeful way to a utopian ideal nation:

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[136] Paul Gilroy, *Against Race*, p. 138.
[137] Gilroy, *Against Race*, p. 57.
[138] Keohane, p. 8.
[139] Turnbull, "Paul Gilroy," p. 5.

> We do not have to be content with the halfway house provided by the idea of plural cultures. A theory of relational cultures and of culture as relation represents a more worthwhile resting place. That possibility is currently blocked by banal invocations of hybridity in which everything becomes equally and continuously intermixed, blended into an impossibly even consistency.[140]

Although to this point in history, Native culture in Canada has been dismissed, or at best, delighted in as something exotic, it cannot be denied that Gilroy's thoughts of "relational cultures and culture as relation" is being tested out more and more within the nation. Even if such does not appear regularly in political battles and land claims disagreements, the music industry, if nothing else, has been moving toward a more integrated and supportive structure for Native music, as revealed mainly through artist interaction. Previously, Natives have often found white artists appropriating their traditional music for commercial purposes and have slotted in elements of North American popular music in order to become a viable product and succeed economically. Native Canadian artists would have felt the implications of the European side of double consciousness when working in the industry; however, recently artists such as Buffy Ste Marie and Robbie Robertson (Robertson in particular) have abandoned their ambivalence and begun to honour their backgrounds. It has not been an easy transformation, nor has it been a complete one. These Native artists still largely use popular music as a vehicle for their political statements rather than traditional Native music. How do white artists then use traditional Native music for a similar purpose? What becomes of the issue of authenticity? How do white musicians make similar political arguments without appearing to be stealing?

Authenticity and Appropriation

Clearly any discussion on the subject of authenticity fades among the consensus that most music consists of *constructed* authentic markers rather than true, pure essences.[141] However, these constructions function as familiar points by which to identify music as belonging to a group, or by which to authenticate an individual's experience. In terms of racial authenticity, the signifiers vary widely to encompass instrumentation, adherence to musical tradition, apparel, understanding or first-hand experience of the group's history and suffering, and a legitimate experience as a member of that group. But the label of authenticity can be problematic in that it assumes an actual essence[142] that likely does not exist, or at least that is susceptible to outside effects. Racial authenticity in music often serves as a reminder of the point of origin for the group or the music and is especially effective in diasporic groups looking to connect to their homeland. Moore notes that this is the *authenticity as primality* argument[143], indicating that when a music is recognizable as originating from its perceived original form, it is validated as authentic. But Gilroy has a problem with this: while music may work to connect racial groups to each other that are spread out across nations, "what special analytical problems arise if a style, genre, or particular performance of music is identified as being expressive of the absolute essence of the group that produced it? What contradictions appear in the transmission and adaptation of this cultural expression by other diaspora populations, and how will they be resolved?"[144] Instead of identifying music as authentic through its extended expression of the purity of a race, it may be helpful to broaden the definition to include the attempts made by groups to make music belonging to the Other. Moore has determined three new methodological approaches to authenticity: "Artists speak the truth of their own situation;…they speak the truth of the situation of (absent) others; and…they speak the truth of their own culture, thereby representing (present) others."[145]

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[140] Gilroy, *Against Race*, 275.

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[141] For example, see Negus, p. 99-135.

[142] Allan Moore, "Authenticity as Authentication," *Popular Music* 21:2 (May 2002), p. 209.

[143] Moore, p. 215.

[144] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 75.

Unfortunately, when artists make endeavours to try on another group's music, it may be for the stereotypical ways in which that music is presented as appealing. For example, white artists could enjoy the spontaneous, "natural" quality of Black music, the attraction of the rhythm-based songs, and the opportunity to use the body as an expressive vehicle for that music; whereas other white artists may be engrossed with the "spiritual" quality of Native music and its connection to nature and the Earth. Conversely, Canadian Cree rap artists appropriate Black rap because they identify with the struggle experienced by Blacks in the States.[146] While the experimentation in another group's music may be seen as awkward or done for the wrong reasons, the intention behind can be sincere and borne out of a desire to experience intimately such music.

And if an artist is not working within a new tradition to come into contact with the culture, it may be for certain types of political reasons. For example, when a group does not have the medium through which to speak their own voice, a well-known artist can step in and articulate what should be heard, likely to a very large audience. Moore calls this "third person authenticity," a case "when a performer succeeds in conveying the impression of accurately representing the ideas of another, embedded within a tradition of performance."[147] And in the circumstances of "second person authenticity," "music was defined not by its anchorage in the past, nor by the integrity of its performers, but by its ability to articulate for its listeners a place of belonging."[148] Blue Rodeo may be just that artist for First Nations groups in Canada (as well as for the majority of the nation's population in the sense of second person authenticity), in that they have a large record company on their side, an eager and attentive audience wanting to identify with their political leanings, and an informative and close connection with First Nations people that allows them to adopt the latter's spiritual beliefs, history, and music.

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[145] Moore, p. 209.
[146] Krims, p. 187.
[147] Moore, p. 218.
[148] Moore, p. 219.

Blue Rodeo: "A First Nations Favourite"

> Authenticity…carries the corollary that every music, and every example, can conceivably be found authentic by a particular group of perceivers and that it is the *success* with which a particular performance conveys its impression that counts, a success which depends in some part on the explicitly musical decisions performers make.[149]

By the early 1990s, Blue Rodeo had become deeply involved with political events supporting Native rights throughout Canada. They were regular performers at the benefit concerts to prevent B.C.'s Stein Valley rainforest development.[150] During these performances, they met several Native leaders and began to develop an interest in not only participating in land rights causes, but also in writing songs that brought the issues to their audience. Perhaps one of the most difficult events Blue Rodeo participated in was the standoff during the Oka crisis in 1991, where the band played on the Kanesatake reserve.[151] The Oka crisis was a long-running dispute over land in Quebec that resulted in a 78-day standoff and armed conflict. Cuddy commented on the terrible conditions upon seeing what was beyond the battle lines: " 'When we got inside, we saw this impoverished, sparsely populated reserve and talked to the people and heard their stories. Like anybody would be, we were just enraged at the imbalance of the battle.' "[152]

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[149] Moore, p. 220.
[150] Barclay, Jack, Schneider, p. 597.
[151] Barclay, Jack, Schneider, p. 598.
[152] ibid.

One of the results of Blue Rodeo's work with the First Nations population was the song "Fools Like You" on *Lost Together* (1992). Directed at the Canadian government, the song's lyrics also celebrate Elijah Harper, the Cree Manitoba MLA who defeated the Meech Lake Accord:

So well practiced
In your deceit
Behind the high walls of stupidity
Your endless conceit
Behind the locked door
The sleeping dog you beat
I hope I see the day
She satisfies her teeth
Give back to the Native
Their treaty land
What you preach you preach for others
Why don't you practice that first hand

God bless Elijah
With the feather in his hand
Stop stealing the Indian land
Stop stealing the Indian land[153]

While the song is fiercely political, the majority of Blue Rodeo's work with Native people, with the exception of the Oka crisis and the Leonard Peltier project (discussed further below) is more celebratory in nature than angry. For example, the band forwarded proceeds from a concert in Port Alberni, B.C. to the local Kuu-us Crisis Line, a Native non-profit organization that offered after-hours counselling on the West Coast.[154] Cuddy also notes that while Blue Rodeo may be part of a ceremony that celebrates the opening of a reserve school or the annual hunting move, they also often enjoy visiting reserves and getting to know the people they play for.[155] It is the solidarity formed between Blue Rodeo and First Nations people that has impelled the further connection developed in the Leonard Peltier album project of 1996. Blue Rodeo's benefit album is one of many efforts made to aid Peltier's release from prison.

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[153] See full lyrics in Appendix I.
[154] David Wiwchar, "Blue Rodeo: A First Nations Favorite," *Wind speaker* 17:11 (March 2000), p. B7.

The Pine Ridge reservation, where Peltier was located, was the sight of much unrest and political activity in the mid-1970s.[156] Indian activists were hiding out in a group of houses on the reservation, hoping to evade the influx of FBI agents and the army. Leonard Peltier was one of these activists; Peltier was a member of the American Indian Movement (AIM), which assisted Natives in legal battles throughout the country and worked to prevent assimilation into the American community. By 1975, most of the Pine Ridge population was living in poverty and in danger of losing a good part of their land, since the Bureau of Indian Affairs was negotiating with the federal government to sell it, a move that would be detrimental to most of the people on the reservation. The population of Pine Ridge grew violent in reaction against these efforts; it did not take long for the FBI to move in and exert force.

On June 26, 1975, a violent exchange of fire occurred between members of the reservation and two FBI agents. The agents died in a close-range execution-type shooting. There was no evidence as to who did it. Following these events, most of the population left the reservation, among them Peltier, who escaped to Canada. He was arrested and extradited in 1976, went on trial in South Dakota, and was sentenced to two consecutive life sentences in prison. Peltier was the only Native convicted of the murders. He currently remains in jail, despite numerous attempts by the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee, churches, government organizations, and celebrities to free him.

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[155] Cuddy.

[156] Information in this section is derived mainly from Peter Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse* (New York: Viking Press, 1980), and from my previous work, "Blue Rodeo," unpublished manuscript, December 2001.

Much of the evidence presented against Peltier in his original trial by community members and the FBI has been proven false; yet none of the discrediting evidence has helped him. It has been stated that there is no evidence to prove one individual, rather than another, committed the crime; according to Peltier, there had also been "fabrication of evidence, withholding of exculpatory evidence, coercion of witnesses, as well as improper conduct by the FBI."[157] He remains in prison to the present day, and the album compiled by Keelor and Cuddy is one of many fruitless attempts to aid in his freedom.

An Open Letter

Cuddy notes that it was Keelor's conversation with Frank Dreaver, the Canadian representative for the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee, that instigated the project that would become *Pine Ridge: An Open Letter to Allan Rock* (1996).[158] At the same time, Keelor was reading the extended history of the event by Peter Matthiessen, *In the Spirit of Crazy Horse*. He convinced the rest of the band to read the book and subsequently wrote a song that appeared on the album, "Pine Ridge." Cuddy wrote "Smoking Gun" to accompany Keelor's contribution. The band contacted their friends in the recording industry, all of whom appear on the album: Sarah McLachlan, the Tragically Hip, Jane Siberry, Bobby Wiseman, Ashley MacIsaac, and the Skydiggers, among others. While Keelor's song is a unique and fascinating contribution to the album, I would like to focus on Cuddy's song, "Smoking Gun," his composition process, and the possible perceptions of authenticity and connection to First Nations people made through his use of certain musical parameters.

Example 3.1 "Smoking Gun" (1996)

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[157] Leonard Peltier, *Prison Writings: My Life is My Sun Dance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 161.

"Smoking Gun" not only gives an account of the events of and leading up to June 26, 1975, but also references general philosophies and approaches to life in Native culture. Cuddy describes specific reactions to the larger society, such as the posting of the American flag upside down in many Native houses, and the desolation of losing their land and homes. While this is on its own relatively effective in transmitting his political stance, Cuddy takes it a step further in the song's bridge, by speaking in the voice of Natives and what they have suffered through, as though he had experienced it as well:

All the misery of his people hung on Leonard Peltier's head
We live like shadows he said
Once we were the keepers of this glorious land
Now we're either silenced or dead

They see the Indian coming
Holding their flag upside down
Nobody cares that justice is done
That's why they planted that smoking gun

Bridge:
And when you're lying in your bed at night
Watching the moon rise overhead
Think of the ways that our people disappeared
They ain't nothing but the voices of the dead[159]

Cuddy occupies a dual position, not only in the lyrics as outsider and Native voice, but also in performance as singer/sympathizer/activist and as Native. It is possible he would be perceived as rightly working authentically within the Native music tradition, as his words express not only what he has heard from the First Nations population, but what he has experienced himself: his voice becomes the Native voice speaking for all.

But the lyrics in the foregoing examples remain the far less fascinating and revealing aspect of the song's possible authenticity. The melodic construction of the

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[158] Cuddy.

vocal line as well as the main guitar figure, the instrumentation, the rhythmic intentions, and the extra-musical features of "Smoking Gun" are all valuable indicators of not only the effects of syncretism, but of the increasing bridge between racial groups through music.

Firstly, the instrumental construction of the song suggests a departure for the band as well as an effort to incorporate specific elements of traditional Native music. Prevalent throughout the piece are bells ringing rhythmically, which could be similar to the bells tied to legs in Grass Dance ceremonies to sound with the beat.[160] Aside from the usual instrumentation of Blue Rodeo--bass, piano, drums, and a guitar that often takes on a haunting, eerie quality--the band has added what sounds like an Indian hand drum to structure the piece and provide an authentic-sounding framework. In making the assumption that a guest musician came in to provide the hand drum track, I asked Jim Cuddy who played it:

> Jim: I did!
> Gillian: You did?!
> Jim: (laughs) It was put on afterwards, but it was a drum I had brought back from Africa. I had been over in Africa. I had been over in Uganda with World Vision and I brought back a drum and wanted to get that drum on this song.[161]

Not only does Cuddy himself supply the drum track for "Smoking Gun," he does it with not a traditional First Nations hand drum, but with a drum he found across the ocean in Africa, bringing more places and traditions into his syncretic mix than I had originally thought. The drum thus provides both a grounding rhythmic organization reminiscent of much of traditional Native drumming and a "global beat" twist to a song based on a

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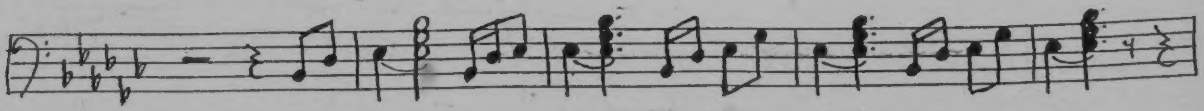
[159] See full lyrics in Appendix I.
[160] David P. McAllester, "North America/Native America," in *Worlds of Music: An Introduction to the Music of the World's Peoples* ed. Jeff Todd Titon (New York: Schirmer Books, 1996), 22.
[161] Cuddy.

popular music form.

However, moving beyond the instrumentation reveals yet another facet of "Smoking Gun" that contributes greatly to its projected authenticity: the main guitar figure (see figure 3.1) is rooted in E-flat minor, and includes the modal seventh throughout.

Figure 3.1 "Smoking Gun" (1996)



It has been noted before that, western music (both popular and classical) has been known to use the modal seventh in an attempt to connote Native musics. Ellie Hisama notes a similar occurrence in the song, "Killing an Arab" by the Cure.[162] The band uses the modal seventh throughout the melody, yet as the character of the song begins to recognize himself in his victim (the Arab), the distance between the natural and raised seventh closes. While the gap does not close in the instance of Blue Rodeo's work, I would suggest a similar phenomenon is working in this way; perhaps Cuddy kept the guitar on the modal seventh in order to speak from a more authentic voice. He utilizes the note in his singing as well, and it prevails most when he is singing the bridge and taking on the Native perspective as his own (see figure 3.2). Despite these examples, however, Cuddy admits that the guitar figure is more blues-based, and that the main intent of his composition was to include the drum and centre the song around the rhythm.

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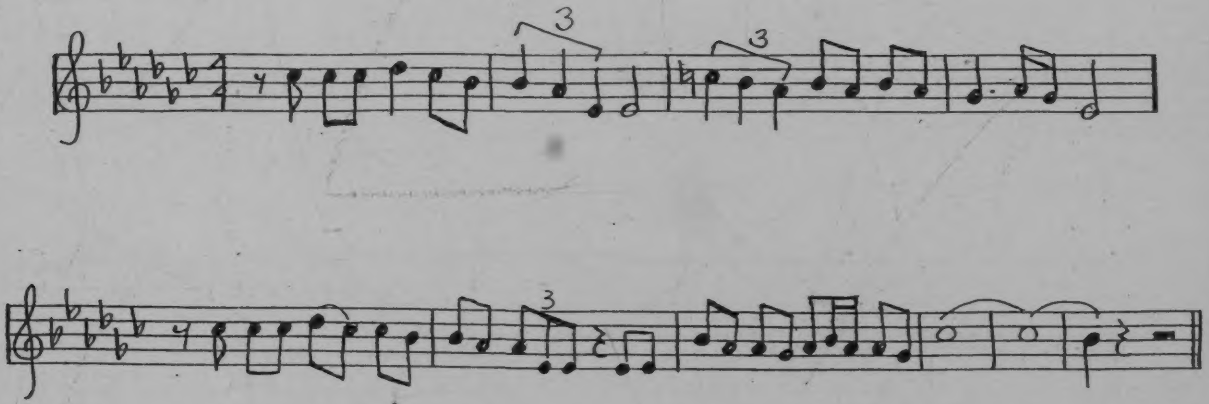
[162] Ellie M. Hisama, "From *L'Etranger* to 'Killing an Arab:' Representing the Other in a Cure Song," in *Expression in Pop Music: A Collection of Critical and Analytical Essays*, ed. Walter Everett (New York:

Figure 3.2 "Smoking Gun" (1996)



In a live performance of "Smoking Gun" on the Rita MacNeil show in 1997, Blue Rodeo appeared to be comfortable in their position as vocal artists and sympathizers and as part of the Native community. The band was dressed in flannel shirts, t-shirts, jeans, boots, headbands, beaded necklaces, and most were sporting long hair. They were relaxed and laid-back on stage, and Keelor started the performance with an impassioned speech about the suffering Peltier was experiencing. Beside the band sat a group of Native drummers in full traditional dress, all of whom were members of the Leonard Peltier Defence Committee. They accompanied the band throughout "Smoking Gun," guiding its rhythmic section, and continued with more traditional music after the performance.

Does this appropriation and integration then become effective in the sense of authenticity with Blue Rodeo? Certainly, one would think that a group of white, middle-

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Garland Publishing, 2000), 59-74.

class men in a rock band would not be well-received, especially if they are attempting to express Native opinion and struggle through traditional Native music. In my findings, it has never been stated whether Blue Rodeo was considered authentic or unauthentic. I tend to believe that their authenticity in the Native tradition is not entirely the issue, since their work in this music was designed for a political and altruistic purpose. And in fact they were quite successful in sustaining the issue in the public eye for a period of time. While the album did not have any direct political effect (Peltier still remaining in prison), Cuddy believes that the album was beneficial, in that it reminded people of the continuing struggle of the First Nations population and aided in some efforts to investigate Peltier's case further.

However, aside from the political implications of such an effort, Blue Rodeo also faced the possibility of alienating their Native allies by appropriating their music, losing their mainstream audience, and projecting themselves in an inauthentic light. Luckily, this was not the case. Perhaps the most obvious reason for Native acceptance of the band's work was their motive for doing it: the intent was not to steal Native traditions or to maintain some sort of superficial connection to Native spirituality and beliefs; rather it was to support a cause that was fiercely fought for by Native groups, and to aid in the eventual freedom of Peltier. Secondly, this was not Blue Rodeo's first foray into such issues, and thus it solidified a bond while delving into Native music. Cuddy also supported their alliance when asked if he ever felt as though he were an outsider or intruding:

> No, no, in fact, you know the most interesting part of our continuing connection with First Nations people is that we learn to interpret how we are received and our connection. It's--we understand now what it's like to go to a reserve. When you go to a reserve, people are *extremely* friendly. But they're not an effusive people.

> They're quiet, and you have to completely change your time sense: when you're talking to people that are European-based, you ask questions and you talk and talk and talk and you get information right away. When you go to a First Nations reserve or are talking to First Nations people, you have to be much--you have to go much more slowly. And you wait, gradually things are revealed…But we have found over the number of concerts we've done that it's a very, very respectful exchange between the band and the Native reserve. And we are always appreciated, I mean, you're going a long way to play music for people. They know us, they've seen us on TV. And we have a specific connection with the Native community because of the things we've been involved with. So I think we've always been very appreciated by the people up there, and we've never, ever been made to feel like we were imposing or imposters or anything like that.[163]

And while Keelor has claimed to have a great affinity to First Nations beliefs and ideals, Cuddy does not have a deeper interest in Native heritage than in his own background. But his interaction with First Nations people often complement his own philosophies, which in turn likely contribute to the easy marriage of his musical background and that of the Native groups he is familiar with:

> I…come away from my trips to the reserves feeling like my sense of the world is slightly altered. I mean, obviously if you go up to a reserve, there is a connection to the earth…Natives have a connection to the earth which is pretty profound. And their sense of holistic medicine and their sense of education and their language and their stories are very, very metaphorically, and in reality, based on the earth…So that always has an effect on me, and you know, I sort of feel like after all this time I've incorporated that into my life.[164]

Clearly, Cuddy himself is not beyond stereotyping, but his point here is more to clarify what parts of Native culture and philosophy he identifies with. What may remain the most contentious point in the composition of "Smoking Gun" is not the instrumentation or melodic construction, but the adoption of the Native voice in the lyrics. To speak as though one were part of a group of subordinate and colonized people from a privileged position is a dangerous venture. While Cuddy could have either maintained the concerned outsider stance or "innocently" composed the lyrics with no regard for the consequences of using that perspective, he was extremely careful and did extensive research to ensure proper representation:

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[163] Cuddy.

> I'm very aware that I did this. There's two sources for that [song]: there's the Peter Matthiessen book that describes the entire incident and background to Leonard Peltier story. And then there was the book of Lakota myths[165] and the Lakota myths are where I took the sort of the apocalypse of the four medicine men and the four corners of the sky and the sun turning crimson and yeah, I was very conscious that I wanted to write in a voice that would match the story. And so it is part narrative and part metaphor, or part dream.[166]

The above evidence suggests that Blue Rodeo did not enter this project blindly. They have a history of working to resolve political issues involving Native peoples and have been known to speak out against the injustices they witness throughout their career. Any attempt to aid in these causes has been thoroughly researched by the band and clearly is consistent with their strongest beliefs. While their appropriation of Native traditions may upon first glance appear to be reckless or unapproved, Blue Rodeo is well-informed and cautious of what they are doing. This is not to say that the band is free and clear to speak on First Nations people's behalf, nor does it erase the issues that arise with representation and appropriation. My point here is to imply that they may be more likely to be perceived as authentic than other groups attempting to do the same thing who *don't* have firsthand contact with such groups. In addition, because they have thoroughly researched the music and remained in contact with Native communities, they are in a position to defend their appropriation and authenticity in that it has been accepted by their Native friends as a legitimate attempt to compose music in such a way.

Conclusion

The question of national identity thus becomes difficult, as a thorough

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[164] ibid.

[165] See James R. Walker, *Lakota Myth* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

examination of Blue Rodeo's music requires the development of a Canadian identity, and within that, a racial Canadian identity. The combination of popular music with traditional Native elements, along with the use of commercially produced music as a vehicle for political statements of a subordinated race, indicates that while complex, a partial Native Canadian identity can be proposed through music. This Native Canadian identity is not exclusive to First Nations peoples, as Blue Rodeo demonstrates it can be tried on through a an attempt to understand not only the suffering undergone by the group, but also their spiritual beliefs, connection to the earth, and history as well. That is not an easy task, since such an identity (especially for a European descendant) could require the meshing of two distinct philosophies, and the resulting syncretism witnesses the abandonment of often fundamental attributes of a racial group (especially for a Native descendant). While Blue Rodeo has indeed made a sincere effort to connect with the First Nations community as much as possible, I do not believe that the problems inherent in not only speaking for a subordinated group, but doing it through adapting their music, are resolved.

Blue Rodeo has succeeded in making the first step towards defining a Native Canadian identity, both for Native and non-Native people through their music. But this first step is small in that it does not overcome either the sometimes problematic national rhetoric of multiculturalism or the fact that white artists are needed to raise Native politics to the public eye. However, Blue Rodeo easily adopts a Native perspective and has no issue in taking on the Other's voice. Taking on that voice may again seem problematic in a nation that seems to celebrate diversity through multicultural festivals and promotion, since it endorses convergence rather than separation. However, since

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[166] Cuddy.

Canada often seems to be only superficially engaged in the multicultural nature of the country, this convergence is actually more in line with the eventual integration the nation appears to have in mind. Taking on the Native voice also becomes problematic in light of authenticity issues. Frith notes, in discussing Phillip Bohlman, that the meaning of music does not emerge in the text, but in the performance of the text,[167] in which case Blue Rodeo's authenticity may be perceived as real when looking beyond the text to their performance persona and extra-musical endeavours in activism. They also will convey authenticity in the sense of Moore's argument that authenticity occurs when an artist speaks for an absent other. Although this is not a commonly used sense, it works for the purpose of explaining Blue Rodeo's work.

The problem mainly lies in the concept of the nation and the notions of homogeneity it carries along with it. While a useful channel for the expression of unity and for the emergence of Anderson's national community, it is limiting in its ignorance, or sidelining, of difference and the complex mixtures that can materialize. Canada is not immune to these limits, despite its appearance of acceptance. Identity admixture perhaps becomes most difficult to analyze not only in race relations within the country, but also in its music industry. The next chapter will examine the problems the concept of nation creates with respect to a national music industry and community by positing a definitive music and a technological community spanning the country. Blue Rodeo's role in the Canadian music industry will be discussed, particularly in regards to their generic diversity, their interconnection of various styles and influences, their public persona and marketing presentation, and their airplay on various radio and video stations.

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[167] Simon Frith, "Music and Identity," in *Questions of Cultural Identity* ed. Stuart Hall and Paul DuGay (London: Sage Publications Inc., 1997), p. 111.

Chapter Four

To this point I have tried to prove either that Canadian popular music is somehow different from all other music, American music in particular, or that if it is not actually distinct from anything else, artists and current discourse maintain that it *is*, that it somehow projects "Canadianness" regardless of this lack of distinction. However, the imperatives of Canadian commercial radio, along with its resulting formats and guidelines, suggest that Canadian music nicely resembles American pop and is largely indistinguishable. What can we then make of this hopeful approach to Canada's music and the evidence provided by radio to contradict it? Is Canadian music really diverse and relevant to the nation, or is it a carbon copy of American culture? The unfortunate limitations of genre categorization determine commercial radio structure and prevent the entry of most Canadian music into high rotation. Yet for those Canadian artists that do break into the commercial realm, it may remain difficult to experiment with alternate styles and sustain a solid role in Canadian popular culture.

I would like to suggest in this chapter that there is a possibility that Canadian audiences may be more accepting and open to diversity within their popular music reception, demonstrating my point through an examination of radio and video stations, interview material, and both academic and media writings on Blue Rodeo and Canadian music. Such an idea is certainly not definite but remains merely a possibility, particularly in light of the contrasting ill effects of the CRTC on radio and Canadian music. However, the triangular creation of a Canadian identity through generic diversity in music among media, academics, and Blue Rodeo themselves will shed new light on the production of and response to Blue Rodeo's music.

In order to determine the above possibility, I will examine evidence such as the format of two main relevant video stations in Canada (Much More Music and Country Music Television), along with Blue Rodeo's stylistic switches, compilations, and marketing techniques. These examples will suggest that Canada and its musicians define themselves through the possession of multiple facets in their identity, one being genre. In comparison to the United States, where artists have suggested they may often be required to limit their stylistic range to mesh with concrete categorizations,[168] Canada is a place where more numerous generic manoeuvres seem to be more welcome. In "The Active Pursuit of Active Viewers: Directions in Audience Research," Debra Clarke advocates the active audience approach to identity formation through popular culture. She suggests, in quoting Willis, that self-identity is often formed through an engagement with music, that the audience is a cultural performer and producer.[169] In the case of a Canadian national audience, as suggested by artists such as Cuddy, I would suggest that self-identity is produced through acceptance of difference. If this acceptance is indeed the case, then does such freedom determine radio formats? If so, do artists such as Blue Rodeo feel they have complete generic freedom? How has this freedom manifested itself throughout their albums? How do their compilation albums reflect the reality of their music? And finally, what effect could the CRTC have on Canadian commercial radio and artists such as Blue Rodeo? These questions will be answered below with respect to current academic work on radio and Canada, media writings on Blue Rodeo, and the band's perception of themselves and their reception.

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[168] i.e. Cuddy.

[169] Debra Clarke, "The Active Pursuit of Active Viewers: Directions in Audience Research," *Canadian*

Canada and Commercial Radio

The largest problem with commercial radio is perhaps its greatest asset: the use of genre categories to define what receives airplay, and who its audience is. These categories are an asset both because stations can attract advertisers with a supposedly definitive collection of demographic facts about their listeners, and also because listeners themselves can construct a musical identity through the intimate connection to the music that the station provides. The categories become a hindrance when audiences desire more diversity in programming, or when artists crossover to incorporate several differing genre characteristics in one song. For a long time, crossover work has been a relatively frequent occurrence between, for example, rock and country, pop and country, classical and pop, etcetera. It is difficult to determine what exactly make up the fundamental components of any given genre. Radio stations as a result have become rather ambiguous in their self-definition with names such as "Mix" or "Power" instead of "classic rock" or "easy listening." Mark Fenster problematizes the genre of country music when discussing its venture into video production in the 1980s. When noting that country must constantly reformat its generic configurations in order to adapt to its audience's expectations, Fenster quotes Stephen Neale's definition of genre: "Genres are 'systems of orientations, expectations and conventions that circulate between industry, text *and* subject'...[but] the industry uses genres to 'institutionalize a set of expectations which it will be able, within the limits of its economic and ideological practices, to fulfil.'[170] Thus, genres exist more to serve corporate radio imperatives than to actually define music itself,

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Journal of Communication 25:1 (Winter 2000), p. 44.

[170] Mark Fenster, "Genre and Form: The Development of the Country Music Video," in *Sound and Vision: The Music Video Reader* ed. Simon Frith, Andrew Goodwin, and Lawrence Grossberg (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 125-126.

and aid in the creation of seemingly finite audience categories. The apparent impermeability of the categories of music are in no way reflective of what actually goes on, as Fenster notes: instead they are constantly moulded to audience expectations.[171] Negus, in referencing Simon Frith, notes that genres are "static categories which do not correspond to the complex ways in which music fits into people's lives."[172] He also argues that the main reason for commercial radio's existence is not to bring new and unique music to diverse audiences; rather it works as a vehicle for advertising, since it is naturally assumed that a specific group of fans for a particular genre are equally attracted to the advertised products on that station.

Canadian radio, driven mainly by the cultural imports from the United States, especially in the early days of rock, inevitably ignored local music in favour of what was thought to be more popular among its audience. Until the emergence of the CRTC, which has been widely controversial for its often questionable methods of propelling Canadian culture, Canadian radio focused largely on American product. While American pop music was without a doubt enormously popular in Canada, it has been noted by numerous authors that it was detrimental to the careers of Canadian artists. Robert Wright is one such author who acknowledges the force that succeeding in the States had on Canadian artists: "The commercial imperative of the English-language pop music industry was, and remains, a profoundly homogenizing force: even among Canadian musicians who did not relocate to New York or Los Angeles, there was an implicit recognition that success meant cracking the American market."[173] But cracking the American market meant *sounding* like an American (whatever that is supposed to be), leaving no room for distinction. This becomes quite an issue with the introduction of the CRTC guidelines (which will be discussed further below); the possibility of developing an exclusive Canadian sound or culture became less and less feasible, with Canadian radio stations pandering to an American invasion and with Canadian artists creating music that was American in character and style. Clarke notes that the influx of American music and television is of continued concern within media institutions in Canada, which would, she hopes, inspire a concerted effort to maintain, promote, and separate local culture.[174]

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[171] ibid.
[172] Negus, p. 81.

Thus, in the 1960s, Canadians began to seek ways in which to define their music against American music, in a way that would not only permeate discourse on the subject, but would also encourage commercial promotion in radio and television. I have discussed many ways in which artists and authors have singled out specific characteristics of Canadian music in earlier chapters, but I have not yet examined the celebration of diversity in any great depth. Certainly, the regionalization of the country mentioned in Chapter Two would contribute to notions of diversity and musical difference, emerging both from the ethnically distinct populations that settle in certain areas, and also the identities constructed by each region for recognition within the nation. But would regionalizing musics make it onto the radio? It wasn't very likely, especially before any CRTC regulations came into place. Wright agrees, not only in his suggestion that Canadian music had to conform to American standards in order to attain radio play, but also in referencing Leslie Bell's observations from the mid-1950s. Her hopeful endorsement of the vast differences between regional styles suggests an early

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[173] Wright, p. 284.
[174] Clarke, p. 46.

acknowledgement of the multifaceted culture of Canada:

> 'Don Messer in Prince Edward Island, 'singing cowboys' like Wilf Carter and Hank Snow, square dances on the prairies, and the traditionally isolated folk traditions of Quebec and Newfoundland--these were the last bastions of musical distinctiveness in Canada. But even these, Bell despaired, were 'losing ground against the onslaught of American radio.'[175]

Note that these artists and traditions are rooted mainly in folk and country music. It has been widely suggested[176] that folk and country are the national music of Canada, not rock or pop, since these forms derive mainly from practices brought over from Europe to Canada. They also are heralded as the national styles because they advance the notion that Canada is relaxed, rural in nature, and a quiet and obedient twin of the United States. And most importantly, it is the particularity, especially of folk music, that indicates a greater and more disparate musical breadth in the country. Folk music allows for numerous incarnations; songs are adapted to fit different traditions and backgrounds, and though their subjects may be historically specific, they recur in different ways. In this light, though I do not necessarily agree with the notion that folk or country music is Canadian national music, it is easy to see why diversity raises its head as a defining feature of the country's music. This idea is supported by both Wright and Myrna Kostash, whom he quotes at length:

> 'Folk music, by definition, is rooted in particularity, in locales and events and personalities which are historically specific and are *named*, and the singer-songwriter was valued precisely for the individuality and personality s/he brought to the corpus of the tradition…But rock music was part of a continental culture produced by and distributed from the commercial and political centres of North America (that is, the United States) which, because of their metropolitan and corporate character, were deemed to be of universal significance and value.'[177]

I have suggested before that Canadian rock music often seems to take on a more universal stance in that it doesn't usually refer to specific places or people, and that it employs more universally recognized instrumentation and vocal techniques as opposed to certain folk music methods.[178] In the case of Blue Rodeo, the majority of their place-specific referents arise in their folk or country oriented songs, but that does not mean those are the only indicators of Canadianness: as noted before, they are may be more likely to be perceived as Canadian when employing certain vocal characteristics, harmonic progressions, or performance practices. The point here is not to determine whether folk or rock is the national music of Canada; rather it is to recognize that all are perceived as Canadian at particular points. Though folk has been more commonly considered Canada's music *because* of its diversity, all musics suffice to contribute to the multiplicity that is considered Canadian.

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[175] Wright, p. 284-85.
[176] See, for example, Wright or Marquis.

Radio has not been known to celebrate this diversity; though despite the struggles artists may face in achieving regular airplay on commercial stations, Cuddy notes that it is easier to submit a variety of songs and styles to stations in Canada than it is in the United States.[179] Video stations such as Much More Music are even more likely to accept a wide range of submissions, thanks to their attempt to appeal to a large Canadian audience. All Canadian stations may be susceptible to the dictates of their advertisers, the ideological genre constructions of the music industry, and the notion that audiences have more limited musical tastes than they actually do; but they are open to work from Canadian artists in that they are somewhat forced to accept it, thanks to the CRTC rules. Rice and Gutnik, in their discussion of Bruce Cockburn, suggest that his success was determined largely by both Canadian audience's acceptance of stylistic variety and by the

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[177] Wright, p. 291.
[178] Gillian Turnbull, "Distinctive Canadian Sounds: Rock vs. Folk in the Production of Place and Space."

imposition of CRTC regulations on radio:

> While Cockburn continues to enjoy commercial success, especially in Canada, he is interesting musically and culturally precisely because he has always refused to accept the boundaries of styles, particularly ones dictated by the American music industry. His independence from those strictures began as a personal commitment, but was aided by the new protective rules in Canada.[180]

However helpful the rules may have been, they also presented some problems. The following section will consider both sides of the controversial CRTC issue in determining Canadian radio formats and its impact on artists.

CRTC: Good or Bad?

The regulations imposed by the CRTC have always been somewhat questionable in their effectiveness in promoting Canadian culture. Surely the original intention behind the Commission's creation was to create a sure environment in which Canadian music could flourish. However, the strict rules have become a burden not only on radio and television, but also on Canadian artists themselves. The point of this section will not be to determine the quality or validity of the CRTC guidelines, but rather to evaluate their impact on Canadian radio and music.

The CRTC was established in 1968; it "evolved from a series of commissions, studies, hearings and legislation on the need to create an agency responsible for regulating broadcasting and telecommunications in Canada."[181] In order to ensure that Canadians had widespread access to Canadian culture and programming, the CRTC determined a mandate that acknowledged Canada's diversity: "Our mandate is to ensure that programming in the Canadian broadcasting system reflects Canadian creativity and

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[179] Cuddy.

[180] Rice, p. 243.

[181] CRTC website, http://www.crtc.gc.ca. Most of the information in this section has been derived from the CRTC's extensive website.

talent, our linguistic duality, our multicultural diversity, the special place of aboriginal people within our society and our social values."[182]

The great fear that propelled the creation of the CRTC was that of American music and culture dominating the nation and suppressing local talent. It was also hoped that by fostering locally produced music and by threatening to legally revoke broadcasting licenses that the Commission would both reflect a unique Canadian culture through its broadcasting and further the development of a national music industry.[183] Thus, the Canadian Content (CanCon) rules were implemented in the hopes of governing (to the fullest extent) Canadian radio and fair airplay for Canadian artists. The CRTC's mandate on the CanCon rules (under the heading "Reflecting Our Canadian Values") declares that:

> Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity are shaped by our history and geography, our institutions and our linguistic and cultural diversity. They're part of our shared experience and our Canadian identity…the Canadian broadcasting system should encourage the development of Canadian expression by:
>
> --providing a wide range of programming that reflects Canadian attitudes, opinions, ideas, values and artistic creativity;
> --displaying Canadian talent in entertainment programming; and
> --offering information and analysis concerning Canada and other countries from a Canadian point of view.[184]

Finally, the CRTC claims that "Canadian content is about Canadian artists having access to Canadian airwaves. CRTC broadcasting policies and regulations support all Canadian talent that contributes to the Canadian broadcasting system."

Originally intended to stimulate the rotation of Canadian popular music on radio, the CRTC (as noted in Chapter 1) established in 1970 that thirty percent of all music must meet one of the following requirements, known as the **MAPL** system:

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[182] ibid.

[183] Joel Kroeker, *Targeting Utterances through the Liminal Mist: An Investigation into the Cultural Practices and Worldview of the Western Canadian Singer Songwriter*, (Master's Thesis, Edmonton: University of Alberta, 2001), p. 47-49.

> **M** (music) -- the music is composed entirely by a Canadian.
> **A** (artist) -- the music is, or the lyrics are, performed principally by a Canadian.
> **P** (production) -- the musical selection consists of a live performance that is
>   1) recorded wholly in Canada, or
>   2) performed wholly in Canada and broadcast live in Canada.
> **L** (lyrics) -- the lyrics are written entirely by a Canadian.[185]

One year later, the Commission changed the regulations so that music would have to meet two of the above requirements, and in 1986, amended the rules for an increase to thirty-five percent Canadian content. In addition, FM stations had to play no more than 49 percent "hit," with the remaining 51 percent constituting "non-hits." Meanwhile, AM stations were allowed to broadcast one hundred percent "hit," as it was feared they would not otherwise be able to maintain their financial survival.[186] The regulations were difficult for FM stations to uphold in the early days of the CRTC regulations, since thirty percent of both hit and non-hit categories had to meet Canadian content requirements. The stations' plight was eased when it was decided that all Canadian releases would be deemed non-hit for their first year after reaching the hit charts.[187] Thus, all Canadian releases less than one year old were shoved into the non-hit category, making room for more American "hit" releases. Given that it is extremely difficult to attain and keep a broadcasting license in Canada,[188] radio stations were not about to ignore the newly imposed rules.

And while the rules seem reasonable enough, they often fail to have the desired

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[184] CRTC website.
[185] CRTC website, http://www.crtc.gc.ca/eng/cancon/r_song.htm.
[186] Anon, "Born in the USA Canada," *Broadcaster* 54:8 (September 1995), p. 17.
[187] ibid, p. 18.
[188] ibid, p. 17.

effect, particularly in the days of their inception. For example, Will Straw notes in "In and Around Canadian Music," that, for example, with the Canadian Heritage statements, the "place of music within the discourses of national cultural identity remains vague and elusive."[189] While national support for Canadian produced news, media, and film has specific imperatives and claims both to reflect the concerns of Canadians and to promote a national imagery, Straw argues that statements about music only ambiguously and uncertainly convey what is being promoted.[190] Is this because Canadian music by its very nature is ambiguous and uncertain, or because it falls by the wayside when matters of national identity are raised? Regardless, the authoritarian aspect of the CRTC rules maintain a sense of the importance of Canadian music in the absence of other governing bodies' cohesive policy statements. While they may not have the desired effect (as discussed below), the rules imply a continued concern for the preservation and endorsement of national music.

However, given that many Canadian artists have succeeded wildly in the States, the original intent of the Canadian content rules can be evaded easily, with the repetition of certain artists and songs already receiving regular rotation on American stations. This has been a familiar snag in the fabric of the guidelines since their launch. Robert Wright's article is based on the very premise that most Canadian artists, particularly those that succeed in the United States, don't feel any sort of obligation or patriotism to Canada, yet feel as though they must tout the benefits of being Canadian. He quotes Anne Murray, Gordon Lightfoot, and Bruce Cockburn extensively to illustrate his point, and notes that "Canadian musicians did not want their success to appear to be due solely to the meddling of the government. Musicians of every stripe attempted to dispel the perception that they had a nationalist axe to grind or worse, that their work was officially sanctioned."[191] Murray's and Lightfoot's quotes support his statement:

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[189] Straw, p. 177. The Canadian content rules make up only a small part of Straw's arguments on the need for more definitive statements on the role of Canadian music in government policies.

> Murray: 'I don't like being used by journalists. You know, as some kind of a national symbol. I'm an entertainer. I just want to share some joy with other people. That's all.'
>
> Lightfoot: 'Well, the CRTC did absolutely nothing to me, I didn't want it, I didn't need it, absolutely nothing…and I don't like it. They can ruin you, man. Canadian content is fine if you're not doing well. But I'm in the music business and I have a huge American audience. I'm going to do Carnegie Hall for the second time. I like to record down there, but I like to live up here. I really dig [Canada], but I'm not going to bring out any flags.'[192]

In addition, Grant notes that Canadian stations more often than not would play artists likely to be heard on American stations: either those that were successful in the United States like Joni Mitchell or Lightfoot, or those that generally sounded no different from American rock bands, such as Loverboy or Rush.[193]

Of course, it must be kept in mind that the majority of these problems occurred in the early days of the CRTC regulations, and many problems that arose initially were dealt with and fixed. Those "crossover" artists like Neil Young and Shania Twain who have left Canada for other opportunities, either in the States or elsewhere, are no longer considered Canadian content under current guidelines. This makes room for artists such as Blue Rodeo, who have not succeeded in America and do not sound much like anything that is currently on the charts in the States, to emerge triumphantly on Canadian radio. Thus we witness a development in commercial radio that enables a shift in thinking about the format of Canadian radio. Whether this shift has occurred as a response to the influx

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[190] ibid.
[191] Wright, p. 286.
[192] Wright, p. 286-87.

of diversity presented by artists such as Blue Rodeo or the Cowboy Junkies, or because stations widened their generic borders in order to achieve audience appeal, is uncertain. However, Blue Rodeo has found a consistent and rewarding place on commercial Canadian radio.

Blue Rodeo and the Media: "A Strong Maple Flavour"

Canadian media seems to revel in the fact that its culture is not American, more than anything else. Yet when an artists succeeds beyond the national border, s/he is espoused for breaking through the barriers of American mass culture. This is demonstrated in the majority of articles on, and interviews with, Blue Rodeo, and Canadian music generally. While there have been numerous writings on the subject since the band's first release in 1987, a select few stood out as being exceptionally dedicated to the idea that Canadian music is defined by its diversity.

Nicholas Jennings has written prolifically on Canadian music for *MacLean's* magazine, along with the book, *Before the Gold Rush: Flashbacks to the Dawn of the Canadian Sound.* In an article on the Juno Awards, Canada's music awards show that is the equivalent of the Grammys, Jennings discusses the unique moments of the show in a way that is geared toward classifying Canadian popular music as multifaceted: "Nor can our music be easily pigeonholed. Only Canada could produce a pop star like Nelly Furtado, who plays cultural hopscotch by singing Portuguese fado songs on a hip urban album. Harpist Loreena McKennitt can play Moroccan roll one minute, then morph into a Druidic New-Age goddess."[194] Such a declaration indicates that Canada is the *only* place where various non-European musics can collide with pop music. Is this not true of

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[193] Grant, p. 122.

[194] Nicholas Jennings, "Rock, The Canadian Way," *MacLean's* 115:15 (April 15, 2002), p. 56.

the United States, or for that matter, any country that witnesses collaboration between distinct groups of people and styles of music? Clearly, that is true; however what Jennings may be attempting to point out is that new styles and mixtures regularly abound on the popular music circuit in Canada, easily succeed as part of the pop fabric, and stand out as the authoritative Canadian sound. He demonstrates his point in referring to some "classic" Juno moments: "My favourite Juno moments include an electrifying duet by Celtic fiddler Natalie MacMaster and flamenco guitarist Jesse Cook; a stage full of pow-wow drummers and dancers that greeted Buffy Sainte-Marie; and The Band, backed by members of Blue Rodeo, singing The Weight."[195]

If it were not for all of these artists and eclectic mixes, would it be possible for a group like Blue Rodeo, who is generically all over the map, to thrive in Canada? Possibly; however many authors, including Nick Krewen has suggested that "Their not-quite-country, not-quite-rock sound has helped to define Canadian music."[196] He notes that "Having long refused to fit solidly into the mold of either country or rock, Blue Rodeo is still producing no-nonsense music that doesn't need to rely on trashy gimmicks."[197] One might think that the hybrid nature of Blue Rodeo's music would prevent regular airplay on commercially-driven radio stations in Canada; as noted above, in order to maintain an audience, Canadian radio has followed the formats of American radio even in meeting their Canadian content. The question remains how a band like Blue Rodeo managed to gain popularity in a country whose radio stations largely avoided music that wasn't popular in the United States. Given the above suggestions that

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[195] ibid.

[196] Nick Krewen, "Un-American Band: Blue Rodeo's Unique Sound Carries a Strong Maple Flavour," *The Hamilton Spectator* (July 8, 1997), p. B8.

[197] ibid.

Canadian music is defined by its hybridity and diversity, one might hope that Canadian radio had caught on to such ideas and rethought its format system.

Instead, what Canadian radio has done with bands like Blue Rodeo is chosen which of their releases are suitable for the format of the station. The band has been known to release rock, country, easy listening, soul, and pop songs. It is this diversity that may have aided Blue Rodeo to increase its audience in Canada and possibly suppressed their promotion in the States. While they have sold many records, toured Canada several times, and have a substantial cult following south of the border, the latter pales in comparison to their enormous audience in Canada. Manfred Sittmann notes that the release of *Nowhere to Here* in 1995 suggested that the band was no longer interested in pursuing mainstream acceptance on American radio.[198] He quotes Greg Keelor: " 'The first song is six and a half minutes, the second is seven minutes. That's not what American radio is looking for...In Canada the band surfaces on alternative, classic rock, mainstream, and country stations...We're a four-format monster.' "[199] Indeed, as Niester notes, with influences from Gram Parsons to the Beatles,[200] from Otis Redding to Roy Rogers to Buffalo Springfield, the band is understandably difficult to pigeonhole. Blue Rodeo has found it difficult to maintain regular airplay in the United States, possibly because American radio is more anxious for continuity with any given artist, while Canadian radio is willing to select suitable releases for the format.

Thus, the Canadian media has been particularly friendly to Blue Rodeo in facilitating their acceptance on commercial radio. The band's perspective on their commercial success will suggest that it is not the diversity of radio structures that enables their popularity, but perhaps their wide audience appeal that garners their consistent airplay.

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[198] Manfred Sittmann, "Throwing the Dice: Blue Rodeo (Nowhere to Here)," *Impact* 3:4 (Dec. 1995-Jan. 1996), p. 12.

[199] ibid.

[200] Alan Niester, "Night To Remember of Solid Gold: Pop: Blue Rodeo," *Globe and Mail* (November 10,

Blue Rodeo on the Radio

> I don't think…that we would rather be something different. I think we were always glad that somehow we were not boundaried, that we could do what came naturally to us.[201] (Jim Cuddy)

Blue Rodeo has claimed in many interviews to have gone about their music composition somewhat blindly, never tailoring songs to what an audience would expect, but always integrating their various influences and backgrounds to create a mix of rock, pop, blues, country, and folk. When asked whether the band composed regardless of radio acceptance, Cuddy responded:

> I think that from the get-go we've had a very high level of acceptance from Canadian audiences, and since at the beginning we combined rock and country and never really got scorned for that, we gradually brought other things into the mix that interested us. Those were accepted by our audiences too. I don't think there's anywhere else that I've ever played that I could think of a band that could do the same things. I think that almost anywhere else you would be forced by at least the industry if not your audience to be represented by one sound. And that's never been in evidence in Canada.[202]

Cuddy noted the difference in other countries:

> It seemed totally strange when we played in Australia. We played rock, everybody loved it, we played a little bit of country and people went, 'Oh my God…I'm at a country concert, this is terrible.' In the States, people are sometimes just bowled over…And you realize that their response is based on the fact that they never, ever hear that.[203]

Clearly, it is difficult for both Cuddy and myself to obtain evidence for the above statement. And if American audiences are so amazed and fascinated by the hybrid music

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2001).

[201] "The Story of…Blue Rodeo," Much More Music, January 15, 2003.

[202] Cuddy.

Blue Rodeo presents, then why wouldn't Blue Rodeo be more widely accepted, particularly on radio? Why wouldn't radio stations pick up on audience response to their live shows and albums? The answer to this goes back to a comment made by Clarke on the complex nature of not only audiences, but also audience research:

> Despite all of the sophisticated methods of audience measurement--for example, the people meter--the industry is never truly certain of actually 'having' an audience. Actual audiences are whimsical, unpredictable, constantly changing their preferences, and therefore the attempt to describe the audience in terms of neatly defined categories is in itself absurd.[204]

The fault, then, is that the commercial radio stations of the States possibly fail to notice that the generic mixture of Blue Rodeo and similar groups is actually a good thing, in that it may allow for broader audience response to various elements and thus present a wider listening base. Instead, stations still seem to be overly concerned with narrow genre distinctions and concise categories by which to define themselves, leaving bands like Blue Rodeo out of the circuit. Cuddy agrees:

> A radio station will flip out on you…our most successful record in the States was Five Days in July, and the record that followed it was Nowhere to Here, which is a very schizophrenic rock record, I mean people were *mad* at us in the States. Radio stations that had followed us--*mad* at us…They were disappointed and angry and dropped us. It probably did more damage to us than anything we've ever done in the States. Just to put out a record that was a different sound. So it was pretty hostile. So I don't know why that is, why Canadians seem to embrace diversity in music, but it's been a very beneficial thing for us.[205]

In Canada, to contrast:

> They will pick and choose, so if you hand them a…ballad, some radio stations don't want to play ballads, so they say, 'well is there a rock song,' so we give them a rock song and they'll play that. That wouldn't happen anywhere else…that's pretty spectacular.[206]

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[203] ibid.
[204] Clarke, p. 43.
[205] Cuddy.
[206] ibid.

While stations do remain true to their intended format, the majority of Canadian stations are willing to play something from Blue Rodeo's repertoire. However, I would like to argue that it is not their generic diversity that determines their popularity on Canadian or American radio; rather their wide appeal in Canada gives them a star quality that Canadian radio can't ignore. Cuddy agrees: "They want the song to be more suited to their audience…[but] I'm sure we get a certain amount of indulgence because we've been around so much."[207]

One would think that video stations may be similarly restricted in terms of format, especially considering the three major, long-running video networks currently operating in Canada. Country Music Television Canada (CMT Canada) is obviously geared toward the broadcasting of country music videos, while Much Music (MM) plays current top 40, rap, hip hop, and rock, and Much More Music (MMM) also plays pop and rock but integrates what would be considered adult contemporary and early rock as well. However, there is a significant amount of crossover between these stations (especially between MMM and CMT), in that many country artists such as the Dixie Chicks, Faith Hill, Shania Twain, and Keith Urban find regular airplay on MMM, while pop artists like Jann Arden, Kathleen Edwards, and Sarah McLachlan are featured on CMT. Blue Rodeo has found a willing partner in both stations, with specials, videos, and interviews from the band shown frequently. A sampling of CMT and MMM done in January 2003[208] revealed that the stations play the same Blue Rodeo videos on a regular basis. The band's 2002 release, "Bulletproof," a slightly country-tinged ballad, was played the most, with "Five

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[207] ibid.

[208] This sampling recorded which Blue Rodeo videos were played during regular video rotation (excluding biography specials, countdowns, and regular series) over 24-hour periods for the month of January 2003 on CMT and MMM.

Days In May" (an alt-country dance), "Bad Timing" (another ballad), and "Till I Am Myself Again" (a lively rock song) following close behind. Some of the band's other singles, such as the harder-edged "Flying," "Diamond Mine," and "Better Off As We Are;" the pop-infused "Somebody Waits" and "Rose-Coloured Glasses," and the country-style "Rain Down on Me" and "Head Over Heels" were rarely seen, if at all. Perhaps it is merely the popularity of the above songs that generated regular airplay over the others, or perhaps it is the songs' middle-of-the-road identity that led CMT and MMM to play them more often. It is likely that Canadian viewers would be aware of Blue Rodeo's country-rock crossover and would accept them as suitable for either network's generic guidelines.

Blue Rodeo has also been marketed as a band that defies easy categorization. Appearing at folk and rock festivals regularly, exalted in country, alt-country, folk, and rock circles, and collaborating with artists from Neko Case and Sarah McLachlan to Great Big Sea, the Tragically Hip, and Jann Arden both on record and in concert, they are widely known as adaptable, flexible, and multifaceted musicians. Their latest release, *Palace of Gold*, witnesses the addition of a full string orchestra and a four-piece horn group to all of the cuts, and they have included the horn players on their latest tour. The venture into soul and R&B on the album did not seem to be much of a stretch, considering their previous work and their willingness to relentlessly seek out new influences. In addition, the compilation albums *Just Like A Vacation* (live, 1998) and *Greatest Hits Vol. I* (2001) suggest that their presentation is intended to cover all musical bases and portray the band as a diverse, musically experimental group. The cuts chosen for *Just Like A Vacation* not only include blues, psychedelic hard rock, and light ballads, but they also present alternate arrangements of many previously-released songs that differ generically from the originals; while the singles on *Greatest Hits Volume I* provide an easy tour through the band's stylistic development from pop and punk leanings to fully orchestrated country and soul numbers.[209]

Conclusion

The various conceptions and presentations of Blue Rodeo suggest a complex and variegated band, one that, given the above scholarly and media discussions, could (and does) fit nicely into the musical construction of Canada. This musical construction could suggest that diversity of style is what distinguishes Canada from its southern neighbours, when in fact what determines the airplay of bands like Blue Rodeo is their national popularity and the possibility of their generically diverse releases to be played on a multitude of stations. It is possible that the notion of variety squeezed its way into Canada's music by means of a media and governing body that created such a rhetoric in its desperate search for uniqueness. And clearly, it is a rhetoric that would, and has, been received and utilized by artists throughout the country.

Blue Rodeo is one of many Canadian groups who feel that, whether consciously created or reflective of the musical status of the nation, acceptance of diversity gives them unlimited generic freedom. When asked whether he felt that he had flexibility when switching genres, Tom Phillips, a Calgarian country musician, claimed, "I feel like I can do whatever I want."[210] As does Blue Rodeo. This impression of freedom may have limited their possibilities for success in the United States in the past, but Blue Rodeo is not willing to manipulate its image or music for the sake of American requirements:

> In the United States, you have to be very easily definable…Blue Rodeo could never be defined like that…A lot of Canadian bands that are successful, they are

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[209] See Appendix II for a complete listing of the songs on these albums and their generic categorization.
[210] Tom Phillips, Interview by author, April 13, 2002.

> very diverse, they do a lot of things. And they put a lot of creativity in a lot of different areas. And then when they get to the States, somebody says, 'Okay, describe yourself, in one word.' And they can't do it, never having to do it before.[211]

Blue Rodeo may encounter difficulties in marketing themselves to the United States because of experiences like this, but they are likely more widely accepted as indefinable because they are known across Canada. Canadian commercial radio does follow the same strict format rules as the United States and do try to create the best demographic audience based on genre for their advertisers; however Canadian radio does not confine itself to certain artists based on genre. This is also not to say that when faced with the onslaught of multiple genres within single artists radio abandons formatting to include all of any given artist's work. But a band like Blue Rodeo will find outlets in rock, pop, country, and light listening stations, and those stations won't disregard Blue Rodeo because they may be played on another station. With respect to video networks, it is not so much the genre of a song or the perceived format of the network, as it is possibly the popularity, viability, and success of a song or video that achieves regular airplay. Perhaps it is also the necessity of meeting strict CRTC requirements that force video stations to accept videos that may not have normally been played under their generic parameters.

And while it has been argued that the CRTC has been detrimental to Canadian music rather than beneficial, thanks to the sneaky methods of playing popular Canadian artists, songs, or styles over and over, I would argue that it can be beneficial. If the enforcement of Canadian content on radio had never arisen, current Canadian artists wouldn't have received much of an opportunity to record and attain airplay, and a

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[211] "The Story of…Blue Rodeo," Much More Music, January 15, 2003.

Canadian music industry might not have grown as it has. The original problems faced by the CRTC regulations have disappeared somewhat as groups like Blue Rodeo have found out that their audiences do indeed appreciate diversity and eclecticism.

Perhaps I am no farther from finding the "Canadian" nature of Canadian music than I was at the beginning of this paper. However, small markers that Canadians use to distinguish themselves from their American neighbours indicate that while no small feat, the search is an important one to undertake in that it demonstrates the complicated process by which national identity is constructed.

Conclusion

Country Music Television Canada (CMT) began a series entitled "Impact" in early 2003, a show that examines the initial impact of a certain song and its subsequent influence on popular music. Artists previously featured on "Impact" include the Beatles, Elvis, and Madonna, among others. On April 4, 2003, the subject was "Four Strong Winds" by Ian and Sylvia Tyson.[212] The song has long been heralded as a classic Canadian song and the show interviewed journalists, musicians, and the songwriters themselves on why it was so popular. Comments suggested that it was classic because, although the places named[213] may be unfamiliar to some Canadians, it evokes feelings all Canadians have (supposedly) had--travelling from Eastern Canada to Alberta, seeing the wide open spaces, and experiencing the hardships of finding work and the awful winters. Peter Goddard, a music journalist, implied that while it meets the "requirements" of a great Canadian song--it is self-effacing, everyone knows it and can play it, it discusses the landscape and the weather, it is about the country--"Four Strong Winds" is Canadian because it is close to the country's music roots (folk) and was quickly accepted by Canadian audiences as a genuine timeless folk song. Finally, Ian Tyson himself noted that the song is of "this region" (Alberta), and that he is unapologetically a regionalist in his writing. Canadians have long tried to homogenize the country into a warm and fuzzy community, but he did not believe it possible: the arts and culture that emerge from each region speak forcefully about the unique lifestyles and people of them.[214]

I mention this program because I think it succinctly summarizes much of what I have tried to express in this project. There are two opposing forces at work in the search for Canadian identity: one that desperately utilizes cultural products like "Four Strong Winds" to amalgamate Canadians in a fantastically large yet united community, and one that refuses to believe such a large, diverse, and regionalized population could come together as a solid nation.

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[212] "Impact: Songs That Changed the World," Much More Music, April 4, 2003.
[213] Full lyrics are reproduced in Appendix I.
[214] All quotes and ideas are from "Impact (2003)."

Thus, what becomes of attempts by Blue Rodeo to transform widely-recognized beliefs about the nature of Canadian identity into music that speaks about and to the nation? There is no doubt that the band feels they have connected to (or even helped create) a national community that possesses an understanding of Canada as a whole. Their ideas of the large "spaces" that constitute the landscape of Canada are obviously ubiquitous notions, considering the ease with which they enter discussions on Canadian music, for instance in "Impact." I argued in Chapter One that Casey's ideas on the primacy and importance of space suggest that it is not anterior to consciousness and is non-existent because everything is a place. And since there is no pre-existing location that hasn't been imbued with some meaning by any given change or human perception, space ceases to exist as a primary, untouched entity. Given the critique of space in Chapter One, the "wide open spaces" concept would take on a different meaning in perceptions of Canadian music. Through Cuddy's ideas of travelling and experiencing the landscape of Canada, I suggested that it may be the movement from chaotic urban locales to less crowded rural areas that inform his idea of open spaces.

It is easy to see why the dichotomy of space and place takes on such importance in light of the dichotomy between rurality and urbanity. Because Canada is an enormous land mass with what would be considered rather empty stretches between urban centres, often the national identity is shaped by a desire to escape the city and retreat to unspoiled wilderness and safe rural locations. However, Canada, whose inhabitants live largely in urban agglomerations, seems unwilling to acknowledge its metropolitan nature. Instead, elaborate fantasies are built out of the variegated landscape and the supposed possibilities that lie within it, in order to imply that Canadians are inherently rural, nature-loving people. Blue Rodeo has built on these possibilities not only by referencing their own experiences of travelling and living in the mountains, but also through commonly-held notions of Canada, incorporating the latter into their songs, artwork, and general discussions on Canadian identity. They have realized what has been understood to be Canada's musical history and roots through their work in country music, and have done it in a way that acknowledges the tradition and the role it maintains in the western provinces. As Lyon suggests, they are maybe not authentic cowboys, but seem to have an understanding of its history and importance, thus making their authenticity to the cowboy community irrelevant.

Perhaps their authentic role in the Native community has taken a backseat to the creation of work designed to aid in the Native plight; what emerges as significant, then, is not their adherence to tradition or adoption of the Native identity and lifestyle, but rather Blue Rodeo's altruistic and intimate gesture. One can argue for the possible ill effects in appropriating another group's music, and such effects are without a doubt relevant to the maintenance of tradition and racial identity and belonging; however appropriation and experimentation beyond one's own boundaries is unavoidable, in the face of the ubiquity of alternate influences. Blue Rodeo is not regarded as authentically Native in their work, nor are they actually attempting to come across as such. Rather, they use their position in the music industry to aid in a cause they believe in, and they do it in a way that speaks both to the Native community and to their audience. I believe that Moore's concept of third-person authenticity, where an artist manages to convey successfully the ideas of another group through music, is what Blue Rodeo has done for First Nations people in Canada.

Finally, while it may not be instantly obvious in Canadian popular culture that diversity is considered a defining feature by artists, since commercial radio is still known to be governed by corporate imperatives and strict formats, Canadian radio is more willing to accept work that fits into its formats regardless of a band's generic identity, and more because of its popularity within the nation. The Canadian content regulations imposed by the CRTC in 1970 have come a long way in promoting and creating a Canadian musical community. While it has been argued that the CRTC rules were (and possibly still are) detrimental to the propagation of national music, thanks to radio stations' tendency to play artists or songs that are popular in the States as well, the regulations nevertheless opened a door for emerging Canadian artists since the 1970s, and these artists have subsequently changed what is considered acceptable on Canadian radio to a certain extent.

The original intent behind this paper was to discover some constituents of the Canadian identity and how Blue Rodeo both contributes to creating it and manifests such an identity in their work and lives. Unfortunately, the answers to these problems have become less and less clear throughout the research on and creation of this work. There are numerous ways in which Blue Rodeo is considered Canadian by audiences, at least according to media sources--their perceived relaxed persona, their celebration of the landscape, history, and culture of Canada, their aid in political battles, their work in several styles and traditions, their generic flexibility, and their early influences of Gordon Lightfoot, Neil Young, and The Band. But in the end, it is possible to carry these characteristics over to other countries or bands--does this make Blue Rodeo not really Canadian? Possibly. Or perhaps it is the very *combination* of such elements that enable them to be successful in Canada more than anywhere else.

Yes, maybe Canadians are inherently nature-loving, easygoing, relaxed, diverse, unassuming people who take pride in their landscape more than their cosmopolitan lives, adapting American popular culture and adding a less urbane, less chaotic twist to it. I have tried however, to undermine the notion that these things are the only essential characteristics Canadians possess. There is a far more complex identity construction continuing in Canada, one that acknowledges racial backgrounds, politics, diasporic populations, urban *and* rural constructions, regionalism, popular and traditional music, and international and U.S. relations, among many other things. The opposed forces mentioned above that celebrate regionalism or attempt to unite the nation become inextricably intertwined as they both carry the same intent: to find a definitive way of speaking about Canada. To answer the big question posed by this thesis: how does Blue Rodeo create a Canadian identity? The answer is much more complex than it originally seemed. What really matters is not necessarily how they create it, but how it is used by the media, and the band themselves to enhance or add to pre-existing ideas of what Canadian identity is. Certainly, Blue Rodeo contributes to part of the cultural construction of Canadian identity, but we should not look for inherent Canadian qualities. Instead, as much of this paper has tried to do, we must look at the ways in which their music can be interpreted as Canadian in the struggle to build a national identity that is unique and distinct from the rest of the world.

Appendix I

Blue Rodeo Song Lyrics

"Train" from *Nowhere to Here* (1995)

I was riding on this train
Looking out the back door on where I had been
Thinking about the sun and your golden skin
Your golden skin

I'm looking back
Out onto where I'm coming from
Out into that big white sun
Out into that big white sun
Big white sun

I was feeling kind of strange
Chasing these tracks to a room by the lake
I heard your song and it took me away
I wanted to stay

I'm looking back
Out onto where I'm coming from
Out into that big white sun
Out into that big white sun
Big white sun

"Hasn't Hit Me Yet" from *Five Days in July* (1993)

You say that you're leaving
Well that comes as no surprise
Still I kinda like this feeling
Of being left behind

This ain't nothing new to me
Well it's just like going home
It's kinda like those sunsets
That leave you feeling so stoned

Hey hey I guess it hasn't hit me yet
I fell through this crack and I kinda lost my head
I stand transfixed before this streetlight
Watching the snow fall on this cold December night

I never thought this could happen
But somehow the feeling is gone
You got sick of the patterns
And I got lost in this song

Hey hey I guess it hasn't hit me yet
I fell through this crack and I kinda lost my head
I stand transfixed before this streetlight
Watching the snow fall on this cold December night

And out in the middle of Lake Ontario
The same snow is falling
On the deep silent water
The great dark wonder
Into the waves of my heart
Into the waves
Of my heart

"Western Skies" from *Lost Together* (1990)

Well I'd rather be .
Walking through the tall pine trees
High up above Lake Louise
And I'd rather be
Chasing after shooting stars
Than waiting for this dumb 503 TTC
I'd like to see the sun set behind Saddle Mountain
And listen to the wind whisper my name
Yeah this world and me don't fit
One of us is going to have to quit
Oh how I miss those western skies

And I'd rather be
Back in the Rocky Mountains
Than sitting in some bar on Queen Street
And I'd rather be
Walking through the high meadow
Than watching the latest war on my TV
So please don't you stand in my way
I've just got to get out of this place
If I waste another day
I'm sure the sun will forget my name
Oh how I miss those western skies

Oh to see the sunset in her eyes
Oh to see the sunshine in her eyes

And I'd rather be
Lying by the Bow River
Watching the clouds go by
Yeah I'd rather be
Anywhere else than here tonight
Stuck in the city
But through the pain good things will come
After the rain the sun
But that don't mean much to me
Stuck in the city
Oh how I miss those western skies

"The Days in Between" from *The Days In Between*

Then there are the days in between
When everything seems hollow and mean
Don't want to move
I just want to forget
Smoke another cigarette and go back to bed
These are the days in between

So I took a ride down to the end of the line
For no good reason
Just looking for a place to hide
So burnt out I can't explain
Just stumbling around from day to day
These are the days in between

And I was happy for awhile
But then I started chasing your stone cold heart
Yeah I was happy for awhile
But then everything started falling apart

Seven times down eight times up
You get lost for awhile
And you feel like giving up
Watching it all go to hell
Living underneath a bad spell
These are the days in between

And I was happy for awhile
But then I started chasing your stone cold heart
Yeah I was happy for awhile
But then everything started falling apart

"Fools Like You" from *Lost Together* (1992)

So good at doing
What you don't do
Just trying to protect yourself
And other fools like you
So well practised
In your deceit
Behind the high walls of stupidity
Your endless conceit

Behind the locked door
The sleeping dog you beat
I hope I see the day
She satisfies her teeth
Give back to the Native
Their treaty land
What you preach you preach for others
Why don't practice that first hand

I just don't understand
This world of mine
I must be out of step
Or out of my mind

And will the profits of destruction
Forever make your eyes blind
Do you bow to the corporation
Cause they pay their bills on time
God bless Elijah
With the feather in his hand
Stop stealing the Indian land
Stop stealing the Indian land
Stop stealing the Indian land

“Smoking Gun” from *Pine Ridge: An Open Letter To Allan Rock* (1996)

Out on the great plains along the sacred ridge
Two men lay dying in the sun
One man would pay for this crime he never did
Hoping that someday the truth would come
Well they pushed them round the corner
Off their treaty land
Waged a war that never could be won
Till they planted that smoking gun

All the misery of his people hung on Leonard Peltier’s head
We live like shadows he said
Once we were the keepers of this glorious land
Now we’re either silenced or dead
They see the Indian coming
Holding their flag upside down
Nobody cares that justice is done
That’s why they planted that smoking gun

Bridge:
And when you’re lying in your bed at night
Watching the moon rise overhead
Think of the ways that our people disappeared
They ain’t nothing but the voices of the dead

Seven sacred arrows four medicine men
Scattered underneath the sky
Watching their people on the courthouse steps
Heard their people cry
They watched the lightning flash
Heard the thunder rolling on
The moon was blue and crimson was the sun
The day they planted that smoking gun

Oh Abel and Cain raised many a daughter and son
Some went to right some went to wrong
Late in the darkness when they look into their hearts
Each sees the mark of the other one
You can hide behind high office
Life of the side you’re on
Someday you will pay for what you’ve done
When they planted that smoking gun

"Four Strong Winds" Ian Tyson (1963)

(chorus)
Four strong winds that blow lonely
Seven seas that run high
All those things that don't change
Come what may
But our good times are all gone
And I'm bound for moving on
I'll look for you
If I'm ever back this way

Think I'll go out to Alberta
Weather's good there in the fall
I got some friends that I can go
To working for
Still I wish you'd change your mind
If I asked you one more time
But we've been through that
A hundred times or more
(chorus)

If I get there before the snow flies
And if things are going good
You could meet me if I
Sent you down the fare
But by then it would be winter
Not much for you to do
And those winds sure blow cold
Way out there
(chorus)

Appendix II

Blue Rodeo Compilation Albums

Legend:[215]
C= Country
P= Pop
R= Rock
S= Soul
F= Folk
B= Blues
A= Alternative
J= Jazz

Just Like A Vacation (1998)

Disc One:
1. "Till I Am Myself Again" **(R)**
2. "What Am I Doing Here" **(P)**
3. "Better Off As We Are" **(R)**
4. "Floating" **(A, R)**
5. "After the Rain" **(R)**
6. "Fallen From Grace" **(C)**
7. "The Ballad of the Dime Store Greaser and the Blonde Mona Lisa" **(P)**
8. "It Could Happen To You" **(R, C)**
9. "Girl In Green" **(A, R)**
10. "Try" **(P)**
11. "Trust Yourself" **(R)**

Disc Two:
1. "Dark Angel" **(F)**
2. "Cynthia" **(C, F)**
3. "Montreal" **(P)**
4. "Piranha Pool" **(J, B)**
5. "Bad Timing" **(C)**
6. "Five Days in May" **(R, P)**
7. "Hasn't Hit Me Yet" **(R, F)**
8. "Diamond Mine" **(R, B)**
9. "Falling Down Blue **(J)**
10. "Lost Together" **(R)**
11. "Florida" **(B)**

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[215] The legend applies to what genre Blue Rodeo is *mainly* working in for each song, from their official website: http://www.bluerodeo.com. For the purpose of determining their presentation as a stylistically flexible group on their compilation albums.

***Greatest Hits Vol. I* (2001)**

1. "To Love Somebody" **(S)**
2. "Rose-Coloured Glasses" **(R)**
3. "Try" **(P)**
4. "Diamond Mine" **(R, B)**
5. "Till I Am Myself Again" **(R)**
6. "Trust Yourself" **(R)**
7. "Lost Together" **(R)**
8. "Five Days in May" **(R, P)**
9. "Hasn't Hit Me Yet" **(R, F)**
10. "Bad Timing" **(C)**
11. "Dark Angel" **(F)**
12. "Side of the Road" **(R)**
13. "It Could Happen To You" **(R, C)**
14. "After the Rain" **(S)**

Appendix III

Selected Blue Rodeo Discography

Palace of Gold (Warner, 2002)
Greatest Hits Vol. I (Warner, 2001)
The Days in Between (Warner, 2000)
Just Like a Vacation (Warner, 1999)
Tremolo (Warner, 1997)
Nowhere to Here (Warner, 1995)
Five Days in July (Warner, 1993)
Lost Together (Warner, 1992)
Casino (WEA, 1990)
Diamond Mine (Risque Disque/WEA, 1989)
Outskirts (Risque Disque/WEA, 1987)

Solo Albums

The Beauty of Our Surroundings - Glenn Milchem (2002)
The Promise - Bob Egan (2002)
The Swallows with Glenn Milchem (Magnetic Angel, 2000)
Bob Egan - Bob Egan (2000)
All In Time - Jim Cuddy (Warner, 1998)
Take Me Away - Kim Deschamps (Warner, 1998)
More Work Songs From the Planet of the Apes - Bob Wiseman (GFC, 1998)
Gone - Greg Keelor (Warner, 1997)
Accidentally Acquired Beliefs - Bob Wiseman (Warner, 1995)
Beware of Bob - Bob Wiseman (Sabre Toque, 1994)

Video Compilations

Blue Movies (1991)

Compilations

Ultimate Singer/Songwriter Collection (Date Unavailable)
Bound For Movin' On (2001)
Handsome Ned - Name Is Ned (2000)
Borrowed Tunes - Tribute to Neil Young (1994)
Due South Soundtrack (1996)
Navy Seals Soundtrack (1990)

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